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HISTORY, PHILOSOPHY, AND GENERAL ATTRIBUTES.

By J. G. MacWALTER,

[illegible] "Personal Recollections," "The Scarlet Mystery," "History of the Irish Church," &c.

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LONDON:
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PREFACE.

It is desirable, if not necessary, to inform the Reader, "in a word," what we think of the subject we invite attention to. Although our opinions appear elaborately enough expressed in the following pages, we shall here say at once, that we are believers in the existence of the phenomena of table-rapping and its kinds called "spiritual," but we are clearly convinced that nothing supernatural really belongs to them. The object of this publication is to establish, so far as we are able, the basis upon which this conviction rests. It has been our endeavour to investigate all that was mysterious in table-tapping and its associations, and to point to the most reasonable and reliable solution yet known of those circumstances which have perplexed many good and sensible people, who seem not, however, to have impartially examined for themselves. We have not, as we had intended, delayed in detailing the minor experiment of mere table-turning,—which, after all, is the least of the mystery,—but employed the space at our disposal in the more important task of searching into the value

of the loftier attributes of the subject. This we did the more readily, as everyone is, to some extent, acquainted, or has had opportunities of becoming acquainted, with the lesser and greater peculiarities of the phenomenon, while comparatively few know anything of its scientific qualities or character. We have carefully abstained from introducing anything calculated to give false impressions or an injurious bias. Our aim has entirely been to set Truth crowned upon his throne, and to tear the veil from off a base imposture. In furtherance of this object, we have selected so-called "spirit mysteries" of the accidental, the designed, and the natural kinds. These we have traced to their respective sources, and those chiefly mysterious or apparently spiritual have turned out not to have been, therefore, the less mundane or earthly. From other hands the effort may, indeed, we full well know, have come more complete and faultless—from none, we can boldly say, with an honester desire to render it both.

Kensington, March, 1854.

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THE MODERN MYSTERY.

CHAPTER I.

PRESENTS SOME LITTLE EXPLANATIONS.

"A marvel! a marvel! hear every one shout,
A marvel! a marvel! pray what's it about?"

BORDER BALLAD.

THE modern mystery is a delicate theme requiring a very cautious and tender treatment. It is delicate in an especial sense; and none the less so, on account of the roughness of its supposed manifestations. While its evidences may, very likely, be convertible into important aids towards the full development of what is yet strictly a mystery, they have hitherto only made "confusion worse confounded"—they have been as dark lanterns leading astray—as characteristics, which, though certain in themselves, make the uncertain doubly doubtful. Every new discovery, it is true, looks dim for a while, and collects around its infant head a perfect "Babel" of opinion. So great are the impediments to its reception, that each theory has just claims upon future forbearance, whenever it successfully escapes annihilation at the outset. If truth be but an

inconsiderable ingredient in its composition, its length of life will not exceed the duration of whatever excitement its birth has originated. But when that great essential to the complete success of any theory forms its chief recommendation, however vehemently it be at first assailed, triumph will ultimately crown it, and secure its introduction to the fellowship of those grand and useful discoveries that have already passed through the furnace, and proved the medium of benefits, of which society at large partakes.

Whatever be the intrinsic merits of the "modern mystery" in this respect its name is otherwise sufficiently notorious. Everywhere its wondrous traits swell the "tide of talk," and maintain an excitement, that is generally, almost, if not altogether, uninquiring. Here theorizers debate upon its scientific value, without remembering that its association with science is yet not ascertained. There experimentizers indulge themselves with immethodical, and, as often false as fair, tests of its singular "manifestations." But "here and there"—more or less—rightly or wrongly—people are all intimate with its real and imaginary attributes. If we visit a friend, no topic has a greater certainty of being broached. If we mingle in society, this ubiquitous guest is almost sure of a prominent place in every evening's entertainment. Students have been known to interline their ordinary exercises with unconscious comments on such new features as have been ascribed to the phenomenon. Clerks, to all appearance absorbed in counting-house calculations, have been observed to pause and mutter something

respecting the mystery which filled their thoughts. Shop-assistants torment, and sometimes amuse customers, with the result of recent experiences, "warranted their own manufacture." Travellers have seldom found so beguiling, so durable, and so pliant a topic. Lawyers snatch trifles from the "incomprehensible thing," and delight the "Court" with witticisms, such as law courts alone could tolerate. Judges themselves condescend to use the "mystery" as a joke-charged weapon. The stage, ever prompt at "taking a benefit" from the most fashionable topic, has forced the undefined wonder into a "stirring scene." Pamphlets, of all prices, and of every variety of tone, have teemed, from the press, in angry war about what few of them even professed to understand. Lectures have been heard by thousands eager, but unable, to get a clue to the mystery. Journals have expended much space, and over-much immoderate disputation, upon the merits of the "great unknown." The very pulpit, with sorrow be it spoken, has resounded with voices raised in its denunciation or defence! Anything which enchains so universal an attention requires to be as clearly comprehended as possible; and all the reliable information to be had regarding it should be expanded into a commensurate largeness of view, and not confined within a narrower compass than that which embraces all knowledge of its nature and history.

There may be those who doubt the prudence of writing even a line upon a subject which has, we grieve to say, given already much disquiet, and produced still greater mischief. Others, too, we know,

deem silence the wiser course—for equal, and yet different reasons. But there is such a thing as over-strained caution, and any withholding of all needful or procurable information would but tend to promote the very evils so justly dreaded. It has ever happened, that when efforts are strenuously made to suppress inquiry, without accompanying such efforts with a satisfactory or even a plausible reason, the effect will be directly opposed to the intention. Moreover, if there seem to be really anything of worth beneath the mask of this mystery, a sufficient number of earnest investigators will keep the excitement always afloat—and thus make suppression more than difficult—and the subject itself certainly beyond the power of harm from the silence of others. If, on the contrary, imposture be the ruling principle—the very "spirit" of this "mystery," —it will disclose itself, by examination. Whatever view we take of it, inquiry is demanded—whether to expose imposition, if it be there, or to discover Satan's supposed interference, if it be there, or to evolve any scientific element which may be shrouded in the mystery; in any case inquiry is needed, and therefore justifiable.

The great celebrity of table-tapping et cetera, if not surpassed, is equalled by the vast diversity of opinion which is abroad regarding it. The only unanimity it has provoked is—to disagree. No set of men, usually found to agree, hold similar views upon this subject, and each clings to an adopted notion with a pertinacity worthy of a better cause. Of course, there are exceptions to this rule. There are some who only ponder upon its general effects without

either questioning its genuineness, or doubting its falsity; they are open to conviction, are impartial and deliberate. But there are others, who declare "the whole thing incredible—a monstrous imposition." Because they have never seen a table turn without physical action employed to produce motion, therefore no table has been turned after any other manner. They never heard a table-tapping—never witnessed any of these alleged wonders—and therefore, with generous grace, they place all the alleged facts to the account of over-excited imagination—mere absurdities, neither Satanic nor natural.—In fact, nothing but a huge and glaring mistake! Others, again, feel that as thousands of unimpeachable witnesses, with intellects every whit as keen as any sceptics, have testified to these marvels, they —even without actually having seen them themselves—ought not hastily to throw an atmosphere of doubt over each and all those cases which have been made public. It is not indeed easy to understand how great and penetrating men, like Judge Edmonds, could deliberately fabricate "wonders," or lend themselves to propagating as facts things of which they have even a shadow of doubt. Besides, if we reject the credibility of credible men, because their testimony *appears* strange, we do that for which, when pushed to its logical conclusion, we should be sorry; we practically cast from beneath us a grand and honoured support. Many, doubtless, wishing, but unable to refuse this evidence, fancy that all these trustworthy witnesses have not sifted the matter sufficiently, or they might have detected, at least in the *table-tapping*, the effect of an

ingenious mechanism—some toe-tapping, knee-rapping, bone-cracking, or crafty doings of the *media*, by means of some ingenious machinery. Others still consider the table-*turning* as the consequence of unconscious muscular action—so unconscious, indeed, that determined sceptics can hardly deny that it is truly strange, and nearly sufficient to work conviction. This, perhaps, is more plausible than satisfactory, and does not at all account for table-*tapping*.

There are others, who, while they confess to a belief in extraordinary manifestations, hesitate to ascribe their origin to mechanical, natural, or supernatural agencies. They are fearful, sensitive, and over-credulous. Inclination induces them to lean towards the notion that mere mechanism is "at the bottom of all;" but experience will not sanction what might appear an agreeable conclusion. These people are in a mist, which they reluctantly prefer to that unclouded light which a highly-wrought imagination renders them apprehensive of beholding.

Another section of believers boldly declare that all is plain enough to them in the matter,—as clear as "noon-day,"—without explaining whether "noon-day" be misty or not. They observe that strange—nay, astounding—"manifestations," such as are beyond all reason, take place without the possibility of collusion, and they ask, How can these be else than supernatural? But even more than that—they avow that it has been "satisfactorily settled," that all are evil *demon*strations—really Satanic; in fact, neither more nor less than a "sign" that the end of the world is at hand, and that our great spiritual foe makes his presence manifest through the very tables on which

we dine and sup, and which we turn to a variety of other pleasing purposes. Strange, truly strange, locality for Satanic manifestation! But so it is said to be. Other opinions amount to this:—All spirits wander about after death, and through the *media*—wonderful women!—are summoned to our tables, and there reveal what appear startling things indeed. The spirits are supposed to be good, bad, and indifferent, indiscriminately mixed!

Some wiser people shake their heads significantly, and widely differ from the conclusions formed by all the others. They upbraid one party as hasty, irrational, obdurate, and sceptical; they tell another that its theory of muscular pressure falls to the ground if a very weighty table moves, nay, lifts itself up, which is only *touched* by a feeble girl; and that such theory, moreover, cannot explain the rappings—the peculiar rappings—which accompany these movements. As for the tapping with the feet, and similar kinds of imposture, the nicest tests have put the possibility of such collusion out of the question, and left the mystery so far undisturbed. Respecting spirit interference, and all similar speculations, the singular evidences of deterioration in learning,—in fact, the inexcusable ignorance,—which the supposed spirits exhibit, are justly held up as a practical refutation of any such notion.

It is, in truth, singular that men who were *here* of high attainments, turn out at the rapping *séances* to be hardly able to spell even their own names correctly. Besides, the presumed presence of spirits is quite incompatible with all revealed knowledge. Those who thus rationally think, hold, in opposition to all other

theorists, that the several conditions upon which the so-called manifestations depend are human and earthly, and can in nowise be attributed to disembodied spirits; that, though the effects appear so startling, they can be traced to known natural laws, and are the effects of a simple cause. In order to arrive the better at some clear comprehension of the subject, at some fairer estimate of these several opinions, we must examine the history of the movement itself, taking up, for and against, none but authentic cases. Such a course appears now the more necessary when curiosity is no longer the chief feature of any experiment.

The title of this book is, perhaps, more expressive than strictly correct; for it is an anomaly to designate the "mystery" we are dealing with "modern," since there is no doubt the very same unexplained influence was felt, and found useful, by the unscrupulous demonologists, and others of that stamp, in olden times. Unlike the ancients, however,—with the exception of a few boisterous beings, who wish to drown the "mysterious noises" in a superstitious and popular prejudice,—we of these days are disposed to examine and test the full value of the so-called manifestations, and not suffer fraud to practise with impunity upon our superstition and credulity. The impositions practised on the ancients, though they ought to yield us caution, should not render us obdurate; and popular prejudice, whether old or new, is in itself an unfair judge, and one, certainly, whose decisions we should not accept without much previous impartial scrutiny.

We know that all discoveries have passed through

a trying ordeal before every objection to their general acceptance fell to the ground. We know that Harvey's bold, and, when broached, astounding theory, that the blood circulated through the body, and was regulated by certain fixed and beautiful laws, was encountered on all sides with scoff and derision. Men of professional experience, of that day, laughed the absurd idea to scorn. The "faculty" spoke loud and long in denunciation of the "insane thought." All England looked upon the theory as a grand absurdity; but posterity has reversed the verdict, and proved Harvey right, and all England wrong. They who opposed him then did so in ignorance, but in accordance with a sense of duty. The whole discussion is, however, pregnant with a wholesome moral, for which reason we have adverted to it: we must never condemn, and never accept, a theory, of whose merits or demerits we are not fully acquainted; popular prejudice should never blindly lead us, lest we "run astray."

The comparative perfection of scientific progress in these days is in itself a further and most significant warning to be "studious and not hasty." Who, a century ago, would count the man more than a silly dreamer, that would dare predict the applicability of steam to its present common and useful purposes? In truth, any theorist, from whom such an opinion might come, would, in declaring it, give evidence enough to satisfy any jury of the olden times that it was dangerous to have him at large. Woe to the unlucky son of science, who in the "good old days" suspected the use to which the electric fluid could be applied—that dreaded monster, supposed to live

alone in clouds, and for man's destruction, not for use! He who doubted such a man's insanity, then, would leave great room to question his own. But we have lived to witness the marvellous utility of these very things,—the most successful triumph of these theories, which our immediate ancestors regarded as scientific vagaries,—desirable impossibilities,—best suited for enchanted climes. In fact, one who views the history of science full in the face, and with an impartial glance, must feel great hesitation before he pronounces any theory—impossible. Therefore it rather becomes us to take up the subject of the "modern mystery" with an unfettered mind, and profiting by such experience as we have adverted to, award no hasty judgments. What if it does seem to us incredible that "table-turning" and "table-tapping," or their attributes, indicate the existence of any unexplored tract in the region of useful science? That steam contained within its reach such widely practical power, as every school-boy now understands, appeared as equally strange to our ancestors. That the very lightning could be forced into the service of man as an actual message-carrier —and such a message-carrier!—was equally, if not more, calculated to make our fathers incredulous and make them pity such ravings. But these wonders, at first incredible and pronounced, having gradually lapsed into pleasing mysteries, are now demonstrated and incontestable matters of fact, and almost indispensable matters of use. Therefore we must pause before incautiously rejecting any new scientific theory, lest we may unconsciously cast from us a gem, and incur the reproaches of posterity, for

being guided by ignorant prejudices; for a want of sound judgment; just as our ancestors are exposed to censure for similar faults arising from similar causes. If the "modern mystery" wear a garb which we cannot penetrate, why, therefore, assume that it is impenetrable? If it exhibit to *our view* no pretensions to general utility, why therefore conclude it possesses none? If, in short, we do not comprehend it, let us not, therefore, deem it incomprehensible.

Thus, completely unprejudiced, the author enters upon an investigation of its history, resolved to recognize truth where it cannot be denied, and to trace imposture to its lurking-place, in order to expose it wherever detected.

CHAPTER II.

ANTIQUITY OF THE MYSTERY—SPECIMENS OF SOME SPIRIT MANIFESTATIONS.

"Uninquiring man,
Wrapt up in an unpleasant dream,
Is prey to drear delusion."—ANON.

No country, whose history has been written, fails to furnish many amusing, and some humiliating traces of similar manifestations to those which are now attracting the attention of the public; and no age is found exempt from their presence. But the symptoms accompanying the phenomena have been dissimilar in different nations and in different ages; always exhibiting a singular capacity of being framed in accordance with existing dispositions. Now historical research beholds them lending fresh terror to the power of unscrupulous craftsmen, in the name of man's eternal foe; again, their tactics are changed, and he beholds them wrenching from hearts naturally prone to superstition, an abject worship in the name of man's great Creator: appearing always unaltered in the determination to preserve the most complete imposture at any cost. Perhaps the success, or rather the adroit energy employed to secure the success attending this resolution, through all times, partly explains the fact, that the wand of scientific inquiry has never been right heartily em-

ployed to exorcise the dishonest spirit by which these manifestations have long been hidden. Should this hypothesis go any length in accounting for, it will hardly be accepted in extenuation of, the blamable indolence attributable to those scientific worthies who passed the subject by unexamined, either because it seemed too far beyond or too much beneath notice. Whether or not the desired consummation is at hand—whether or not modern excitement and inquiry will dispel the hoary mystery—will make the "fraud" manifest, or the "theory" practicable, no one can positively predict, although there is room and reason to pronounce it highly probable; and if for no other reason, for this:—Investigation never before so occupied the attention of unbiassed and keen-sighted people—never before infused such an unfearing and philosophic spirit in the public mind. The undoubted newness of this universal and natural curiosity has, however, led to one illusion; it has coloured the subject with its own novelty—it has given the freshness of to-day to the bugbear of antiquity. There is really, we repeat, nothing modern connected with the subject, but the unprecedentedly boisterous reception its re-appearance has met with. Had our fathers been less swayed by a traditional dread of spiritual and temporal consequences than we know them to have been, the very innermost recesses of the mystery would have been long ago explored, and the "discovery" descended to us either as a demonstrated good, or a proven evil—clear, at all events, from mystification. But, instead of that, a superstitious timidity always seized upon inquiry, and quashed it at once. Hence, every

variety of real or sham manifestation was formerly received with equal horror, and awarded a similar amount of Satanic reputation. The mechanic ingenuity of a Houdin would have then been deemed as diabolical, and denounced as vehemently, as the reported table-talk of a Dibdin. But the "good old times" are gone; and modern men, with modern impartiality and comprehensiveness of view, steadily and fearlessly look the ancient mystery, or any other mystery, in the face, demand a satisfactory explanation, and will be satisfied with nothing less.

When one searches for the former appearances of these manifestations, and examines the features they frequently presented, he is at a loss to conceive how men could altogether have lent themselves to that superstitious dread which banishes reflection and makes the natural appear supernatural, which confounds the really simple with the really marvellous. This mental inactivity is, perhaps, excusable, when the circumstances of the times are fully considered. But we must not, however, either defend or further condemn it; having at once to lay before the reader some illustrations of the serious extent to which this timidity exposed those who were influenced by it. The history of "spiritual manifestations"—we use the professional phrase, because it is the best known—affords a very wide field of selection, for the purpose of exemplifying the dangers attending this dread; and it is no less prolific of evidence, to prove how very insignificant were most of the causes of alarm,—how truly simple, but how wofully misunderstood. Perhaps the people of this land can point to fewer instances—either of evident imposture

or real mystery—than those of other nations. Germany, of all lands, has the highest claims to old and extensive intimacy with the very "noises" which now do so much mischief, and create such excitement on the American continent. So alarmingly did they spread through the German empire in 1134, that special and official notice of their peculiarities and extent was placed on record in the "German chronicles" of the following year. They are called "mysterious sounds," and described so as to leave no doubt that they do not differ from the "mysterious sounds" of these times. Even before that date similar noises were noticed in other continental countries, and since that date they have occurred more or less frequently. The fathers of "the church," in great trepidation lest men should be contaminated by wilful association with the "evil one," have often taken occasion to rush between the people and those wily wretches, who took advantage of willing ignorance to make "the mystery" a profession. Doubtless, when Tertullian wrote, craftsmen and money-making mediums, then figuring under other names, fed largely on public credulity, and, as now, benefited greatly by being deemed representatives of supernatural power.

"Do not your magicians," says Tertullian, "call ghosts and departed souls from the shades below, and, by their infernal charms, represent an infinite number of delusions? And how do they perform all this, but by the assistance of evil angels and demons, by which they are able to MAKE STOOLS AND TABLES PROPHESY?"

Nothing could more pointedly establish the iden-

tity of modern manifestations with those of which the writer speaks, than the allusion in the last line And nothing, too, can better show the necessity for investigation than the uninquiring readiness Tertullian displays to accept the conclusion he has made, because the "manifestations" *seemed* to be the effect of "evil demons." Not, however, to quarrel, just now, with his decision did we introduce this passage, but merely to prove the hold which the mystery had taken of people in his time, and the danger apprehended from pursuing the very course Tertullian adopted,—giving it, without true grounds, a Satanic character, and thereby spreading a superstitious awe when inquiry might disclose a simple cause, and remove both the mystery and its danger together.

While continental countries, especially the German states, possess very much testimony to the prevalence in ancient times of this "mystery," we are not without proof enough in our own archives of its existence here. Many instances are given; but we will now only mention one reliable case, bearing a marked resemblance to many modern manifestations, and said to be an honest type of many ancient ones. As a specimen of a class we therefore give it, merely premising that it, or its obvious origin, does not represent *all* recorded manifestations. The illustration we allude to is related by Glanvil, Charles II.'s chaplain, in a theological work of some credit, published in that monarch's reign. We abridge the story, retaining its value:—A Mr. Mompesson, who indulged a peculiar predilection for drum-music, once kept in his household a drummer. For

some unexplained cause he thought proper to dispense with this noisy appendage to his home comforts, and, accordingly, sent drum and drummer "to the wars." Immediately afterwards, his hitherto peaceful establishment was disturbed by the *rata-plan* of the drummer, who sounded "to arms" unceasingly. In vain the poor householder paraded his dwelling, armed to the teeth; for he neither encountered the tormenting foe nor hushed the disturbance. If Mr. Mompesson reconnoitred in the withdrawing-room, the drumming seemed to have fled to the parlour; when he rushed thither after the invisible pest, the noise retreated to the kitchen, and from the kitchen penetrated every nook and corner, pursued by the unlucky Mompesson, until it escorted the distressed man to his bed, and having drummed him into sleep retired for the night. When several months had been spent in this unpleasant manner, Mrs. Mompesson became ill, and the noise—perhaps in compliment to the occasion—gallantly ceased, and, as courteously, maintained a silence until that lady was well enough restored to endure a greater drumming than ever she had to endure before. Some time after this, a partial suspension of the annoyance was experienced, and, as a curious coincidence, it was discovered that the drummer had been just transported for some offence or other. Immediately, people of more than common shrewdness set down the strange occurrences—hitherto ascribed to "spirits"—to some ingenious plot, put in operation by the discharged servant. However, to the amazement of everyone, when the drummer was supposed to have been far

beyond the seas, the noise again began, and continued with greater vigour than ever. At once the "manifestations" were declared spiritual, and friends were called in to hear and examine. On one occasion, when the parish clergyman and others had assembled for that purpose, a spectator said, as if to the *noise*, "If the drummer set thee to work, give three knocks:" and the desired reply was given. This was taken as positive proof that Satan was the drummer's slave in the matter. For more than three years these persecutions continued; but suddenly, on the third year, they stopped, and for ever. The tormented family always looked upon it as a spirit visitation, although it was clearly proved that the drummer had made his escape from the penal settlement a little before the noises were recommenced, and had died soon after they were found to have thoroughly ceased.

This drumming disturbance reminds us of another occurrence, which though so modern as to date only from about 1826, is apposite, being of this class of manifestation, and characterized by greater symptoms of the diabolic agency than are needful to satisfy the most earnest and fastidious advocate of "Satan in the tables." Its history runs thus:—

For upwards of fifty years, a property in the south of Ireland, upon which was built a magnificent mansion, and which possessed all the rich and expensive appendages of a princely estate, was left in the sole charge of a favourite steward, by the earl who derived a title and income from it. Through an unaccountable infatuation, the noble earl tacitly submitted to the ruin of this splendid house and property, rather

than incur the supposed annoyance of his dead ancestors. Once, it is reported, and once only, he deputed a relative to visit, and test the alleged "spiritual manifestations," of which his family residence was the scene. This relative returned, and, it is said, only lived long enough to recount the marvellous sights and sounds, which were there more terrific than report had represented them. What he had seen and heard acted so terribly on his nerves as to terminate in death. No farther attempts were hazarded by the affrighted owner; and the steward, whose courage became a subject of wonder and eulogy, was duly installed in possession of the mansion during the lifetime, at least, of its then lord,—of course remitting the ordinary rent collections. In explanation of the steward's astonishing bravery, it was urged that the late lord had proved particularly partial to that servant's family, and, as his lordship was never an admirer of his own son and heir, it was presumed that the hostility shown to the one (or to his emissaries) was exactly in death as it had been in life; and that the favour to the steward was measured by the Earl's known regard for that personage while "at this side the grave." It happened—such coincidences are common—that the timid lord and the courageous steward in question died about the same time; the one, far from his ancestral halls, in comparative poverty—the other, in these very halls, in comparative opulence. Both were old men: one a simple nobleman, the other a crafty plebeian.

Forthwith a new earl and a new steward—heirs both to the deceased—came in each for their re-

spective positions just vacated. The young lord had been in the Indian army, and came home to receive his title, and with it he was resolved, in spite of all "spirit manifestations," to try and enjoy his property where it could be best appreciated—at home. The young steward had been "engineering," but found the luxurious life lately led by his dead father far more tempting; and, accordingly, all other pursuits were abandoned for its enjoyment.

One morning, some few days after the mansion was arranged for its new occupier, a travelling carriage arrived, with the real owner, who came quite unexpectedly. No ceremony was offered or required; his orders, on the contrary, were to keep his presence as private as possible, as he meant to remain but for a few days, previous to returning to make preparation for a continued residence.

"Reside! *Here, me lord!*" cried the alarmed domestic, who received this information; "sure 'tisnt outright crackt you'd be, and I ax your lorship's pardon for saying so bowld a thing. But sure yure grate father, me lord—God be good to em—wouldn't think o' the likes o' that, good nor bad. Stay here, inagh! That I mighn't ate a bit the yere thro' if it don't sicken me grately to hear your lorship saying sich a thing. Sure, every mauther's sowl that iver kem inside o' the walls knows about the ghost. 'Tis the most haunted house in the face of airth, and it's I that knows it to my heart's sore, so 'tis. Well, well, think o' that tho' remain here—was uver the like heerd tell of, 't all at all."

But the heir, although his imagination was much worked upon, coolly prepared to meet the worst, and

to test fully these "mysterious manifestations" which stood between him and the possession of his home. Regardless of the extreme zeal shown by the domestics, and the earnest remonstrances of the steward, his lordship selected for the night the very chamber which rumour assigned to the especial use of the ghost. With elaborate care it was made ready for his reception; and with, in truth, some uneasiness and a vast deal of preparation, expressive of much more fear than he wished to evince, his lordship took up his quarters. At one side of his "easy chair" was a table, strewn with the newest periodicals and papers. A bright fire blazed cheerfully before him on the hearth—no grates then adorned the mansion. On a small table, near the bed, stood wine decanters, and vessels with other comforts for the "inner man;" and placed on the chimney-piece were his pistols and sword—poor weapons, as the housemaid assured him, for battle with a "rale sperit." As the mystic hour of midnight drew nigh, the young lord became a prey to fears for which he could not account. The house was still as death; not a movement or a noise occurred of the most insignificant nature—as his vigilance, which was excessive, told him. Now and again he started when the turf embers, dwindling into ashes, produced an inconsiderable stir, which, under other circumstances, he might not have remarked, or been able to distinguish. It approached twelve, and he listened with breathless attention for the expected striking of the hall-clock. It came—long, low, and dismal. He trembled a little. As the twelfth stroke was heard, he felt frightened, although he could not

explain why, but he certainly fancied a stranger sound accompanied that stroke. Presently a very delicate tapping was heard, as though immediately outside the room door. He grew alarmed, but soon reassured himself—it might be the dog, or something. But dogs do not walk like men, and he began to hear, with less alarm and increasing courage, steps ascending the stairs as of an armed man—heavy, clanking, and solemn. They resounded through the whole house. He seized a pistol and sword, and endeavouring to suppress a growing excitement, waited any intrusion that should be made. The door was thrown open by no known or visible agency, and instead of a man or some substantial creature, volumes of thick vapour were admitted. In a few seconds the room was dim, and smelled horribly of brimstone. The noise continued, increased, and seemed at once in every part of the house. Without seeing how it could possibly be done by mere human agency, he observed that candles were flung from end to end of the room. The poor young lord was ready to rush out at the window, and risk a broken neck, rather than seek the gratification of any further curiosity. Indeed, curiosity was not now his object—but safety. Doors slammed, chains, as of one trammelled heavily, clashed; hardly audible, but frightfully unnatural moans were now at this side, now at that. Bewildered, the young earl grasped a candle, and re-clenching his sword, he made for the door. The chained spirit seemed retreating before him; he followed blindly, for, in fact, he knew not what he was doing. From room to room the noise fled, and, as though conducted still

on by an irresistible attraction, he followed. Now on the lobby—now down one stair—now through another room, still maintaining the same diabolic moans and terrific clatter, the invisible thing was unconsciously pursued by the almost frantic young man, until he verged on a sort of desperation, when he wildly exclaimed, "Lead on: I 'll follow to death!" His tremendous anxiety to get away by some means, became more than distracting, when he found it impossible to evade an unbidden and unmeant pursuit. After a noise—a horrid noise, which, like the *ignus fatuus*, still tempted the perplexed lord to follow, he thundered out in the vehemence of despair, "I 'm a soldier, and fear not death—lead on!" By degrees the sounds had grown nearer and nearer, until at length they seemed to have confined themselves to one corner, whither they were followed by the furious and almost breathless earl, still menacingly waving his sword, and exclaiming, "Lead on!" When he drew near the corner, however, the clanking suddenly ceased, and a clear but tremulous voice cried out, "Spare my life, my lord, spare it, oh do, and send me where you plase. I didn't think you war so brave, or I 'd have stopped long ago. Spare me, plase your honor, and may your sowl rest in glory!"

The reader will easily divine the rest, and give the steward's family, at least, that credit they deserve for ingeniously manufacturing "spirit manifestations," which tended to uphold them in the dishonest possession of their wealth. With them, as with others, "spirit-rapping" was a profitable profession.

These mysteries convey their own solution, and

do not tax us with the responsibility of attributing them to any extraordinary cause, although, no doubt, they for a long time enjoyed the reputation of supernatural manifestations, and would figure so still, if not contradicted by their own manifest explanation.

CHAPTER III.

CONTAINS OLD JEFFERY'S RAPPINGS, A MONKEY'S TAPPINGS, AND A DRUNKARD'S WARNINGS.

"Three modern wonders here have we,
Wonders so plain that all can see."—ANON.

WITH the humiliating consequences of an easy credulity, evidenced by the "peculiar manifestations" noticed in the last chapter before one's mind, we cannot be dead to the necessity of strict inquiry. By investigation any imposture and its results are wholly abolished, and superstition sustained by fraud in the hearts of the credulous is entirely eradicated. Now, although we have not the least doubt that a rather bulky proportion of the boasted manifestations—either new or old—belong to the same category of fraud, we are free to confess that other recorded instances of the "mystery" do not admit of any similar solution; while others can still be traced to a less vindictive or sinful, and to a far simpler origin. That it is so, however, affords but an additional reason why silence on the matter should not be encouraged. It seems not only unfair but exceedingly injurious, and monstrously absurd, to ascribe to one common cause, mingle in one common detestation, and award one common doom to, all manner of manifestations. We

are cowards—nay, even worse—if we hesitate in seeking to separate the good from the bad, the right from the wrong; we are illogical and narrow-minded, if we infer that evil or imposture belongs to all, because some cases have been found of both.

It seems somewhat strange that people do not remember how all things pertaining to this nether sphere are invariably, we had almost written of necessity, associated with, and exposed to, every variety of imposture. Nor does it much matter whence they have emanated, or in what age they have appeared. Truth itself, brilliant and intact as it is, glistens—pure, steady, independent—conscious of innate worth and regardless of extraneous adornments, but has on this account no immunity from an inevitable contact with fraud and falsehood. And the fact that "the evil one" too oft appropriates to the benefit of wickedness these bright rays of truth, only proves his power and skill; but the inextinguishable light of truth itself cannot therefore be clouded, though it may be abused. The way to render truth tasteless is to clothe it in something most unlike itself, and by a similar contrivance error is rendered palatable. Like the Chinese jewel trader, he brings his customers the real gem set simply and rudely, and seemingly despised by the vendor, while the mock one is encircled with sufficiently apparent grace and richness, and so scrupulously cared for and cunningly commended, as to decide the choice in its favour, unless the purchaser be well initiated in the "craft." It is hence certain that, except people do more than think, they cannot possibly penetrate the artful disguises of the designing—they cannot know the

"bearings" of a theory without "sounding"—or whether a visible light is not a false reflection, without testing. Look at the deceptions, the impositions, the frauds which, "since the world began," have crept into all true theories, ay, into the very sanctuary of true religion itself. Look at them, and do not be amazed that the "modern mystery"—whatever its intrinsic value—has been caught hold of for similar ends. Nothing is free from this danger, but anything is not necessarily bad in itself, which is made a convenient medium of it. And we opine, that less of the mischief—and it has been much—would appear, were fewer superstitious ideas abroad respecting the mystery. The cases already cited show how a notion of the supernatural is but a shield for safer imposture. At present, as well as long ago, a skilful rascal, having an object tempting enough to excite him, would, no doubt, do as much to accomplish it with the aid of science—if it afford him any—as we have seen the steward do with the aid of mere ingenuity. But it will be granted, that neither the profound leader of a specious Christian schism, nor a shallow schemer establishing a new Mormonism, can affect the vital principle of Christianity. No more, say we, can a mere craftsman, however ingeniously he works, nor an erratic son of science, however eloquently he pleads, disturb the tranquillity of the *truth* which may be reposing in *the mystery*, although its speedy development can, at the same time, easily be retarded.

These remarks will apply to all the peculiarities of the subject we propose showing to the reader: they

well apply to the palpable impositions, the mistaken manifestations, and so forth, no less than to the most unintelligible features discernible in it. Some of the proven "impositions" have already been given. We take up now the "mistaken manifestations," or "noises about nothing,"—as much in order to bring the narrative nearer our own time and place, as to record specimens of those "evidences" not humanly designed as impositions, but having all the appearances and effects of the supernatural.

The celebrated John Wesley's family, it is notorious, was for a considerable time subject to strange annoyances, somewhat like the sounds and rappings characteristic of the modern mystery. So serious did the great founder of Wesleyanism deem the manifestations, that he took up his pen to relate all he knew about them. The history of these noises is very briefly as follows:—In 1715, when John Wesley's father, the Rev. S. Wesley, resided in the glebe house of Epworth, in Lincolnshire, sundry curious noises were repeatedly heard by several members of the family, who carefully concealed the matter from old Wesley, lest he might think, as they thought, that these were forewarnings of his approaching death. This course could not be long continued, as the disturbances became daily greater, and more inclined to make the head of the house hear. When he did, he was rather amused than alarmed, for he considered certain young gentlemen, who were attentive to his daughters by day, meant to compliment them in that curious manner by night. The daughters, who felt persuaded that this

was too pleasing a key to the puzzle, rather encouraged the good man's notion than disabused it. Once, however, it occurred that, after he went to bed, a singular tapping in the next room induced him to leap up and discover its cause, but neither then nor afterwards did he find any clue to the noise.

The children, who were at first a little, and by degrees not at all, afraid, had a very decided belief that the noise was occasioned by an old man called Jeffery, who died in the house; and they were accustomed to cry, when the tappings were heard, "Here comes Jeffery;" observing, "He is early" or "late to-night," as the case may be. It was not for a long time easy to convince the elder members of the family that the noise was not occasioned by some ingenious trick of the younger. In order to be quite certain, Mary, the eldest daughter, contrived to remain up once, instead of a younger sister, to remove her father's candle when he had gone to bed. John Wesley fully relates his sister's adventure:—She had no sooner taken away the candle than she heard a noise below. She hastened down stairs to where the noise was, but it was then in the kitchen. She ran into the kitchen, where it was tapping the inside of the screen; when she went round, it was drumming on the outside: then she heard a knocking at the back kitchen door. She ran to it, unlocked it softly, and, when the knocking was repeated, suddenly opened it; but nothing was to be seen. As soon as she had shut it, the knocking began again. She opened it again, but could see nothing; when she turned to go to bed, the knocking recommenced and continued. "From that time,"

writes her brother, "she was thoroughly convinced there was no imposture in the matter."

As we have said, the family got quite accustomed to, and lost all terror in, the disturbances; John Wesley, in telling us so, adds:—"A gentle tapping at the children's bed-head usually began between nine and ten at night; they then commonly said to each other, 'Jeffery is coming; it is time to go asleep.' And if they heard a noise in the day, and said to my youngest sister, 'Hark, Kizzy, Jeffery is knocking above,' she would run up stairs, and pursue it from room to room, saying she desired no better diversion."

About the facts of these occurrences there is no doubt whatever; their cause is to be variously accounted for. Perhaps the subjoined manifestation may throw some light upon the matter. It is equally authentic, and, as will be seen, its mysterious nature had as varied a character as the Wesley affair could have had. We tell it as our sire, who knew the chief character, told it to us:—

An English friend who had to sojourn for a few days in the city of Limerick, gladly accepted the invitation of a hospitable magistrate whom he knew, to make himself at home under his worship's roof during his delay in that town. This friend piqued himself upon the possession of much moral fortitude, and always stoutly ridiculed the notion that disembodied spirits troubled themselves about their "brethren in the flesh." Soon after dinner, at the justice's, conversation was designedly turned on that very subject, and the friend's views were speedily "at the pleasure" of his host.

"I 'm so glad," observed the magistrate, "because, if you had any fears, it might happen that during your stay here the intelligence would reach you that ours is a haunted house. You may smile; but I am myself, from being very sceptical, like you, convinced that some extraordinary and supernatural manifestations are permitted. Now, I will say no more about it, as I have no fear that any incautious observations will dishearten you, since it is quite evident you are a dauntless sceptic."

"But pray tell me, What are the peculiarities of *these* 'manifestations?'" demanded the sceptical visitor. "I have very often heard of such things without feeling a whit disposed to credit their spirituality, even though I may admit their existence."

"If you were to remain here long, you would neither question their actuality nor spirituality," replied the justice. "I assure you, and I do so without any hesitation, that for the last six months one of my best bed-rooms is unoccupied, in consequence of these very singular and very unnatural occurrences. I ventured myself, in a sceptical mood, to sleep in that room, when all else were regularly routed, and the result was,—before I had lain down for five minutes—enough occurred to convince and terrify me; and, believe me, I have not repeated the experiment. You look with surprise, but don't be at all alarmed; I have no intention of asking you to sleep there."

"You mistake me; far from being alarmed at the prospect of sleeping in that apartment, I am about to ask permission to do so, and to ask it as a favour."

After many deep and earnest remonstrances,

the magistrate consented to gratify his guest's intense desire to penetrate the mysteries of the haunted chamber, and had everything put in fitting order, for the purpose of making the dreaded apartment bear some needed tokens of comfort. To heighten the impressive nature of the event, the maid-servants, with a shudder, decidedly refused to enter the dreaded chamber; and the sterner sex, when induced to pass the door-post, actually stood close to each other while holding guard within; that position being considered the most favourable for a safe retreat, should the spirit manifest impatience. The room was "done" without any particular evidence of a spiritual presence occurring; but no sooner did the troop of domestics turn to depart, than a hollow, jerking noise, as though the tapping of stones in some part of the wall, threw utter confusion into the retreating ranks, and without concern for bodily hurt, the terrified menials rushed precipitately down stairs, uttering shrill cries, and tumbling over each other in the *mêlée*. The justice, with looks of deep concern, appealed to his guest, if this testimony to the terrible truth were not enough to damp his ardour. But the young traveller retained his smile of indifference, and ascribed the terror of the inmates to an exaggerated predisposition to receive any noise in that room as a spirit noise. The very shaking of a window, he argued, might produce that alarm which they were so ready to take. The time for his own trial soon arrived, and, amid prayers for the successful issue of an experiment so often fruitless, he entered the neglected but well-furnished

room. Having carefully examined every article of furniture, he satisfied himself that nothing of machinery in them, or otherwise connected with them, was likely to aid in disturbing him. The beautiful bed-posts he observed were very much scratched, and the curtains all torn. Beyond this he could trace nothing to dishearten him, and considering what might occasion these things, he composed himself to sleep. Suddenly he heard tappings as if over head, now near and now silent; again a noise as if a light step had trodden along the carpet. He did not stir, but eagerly listened for further manifestations, for of these there could be no doubt. For a few moments all was still, and he only imagined he heard a slight, very slight breathing. It had, however, the effect of banishing sleep for a while; but as nothing farther then occurred, he attributed what had happened to noises in the next room, transferred to his own by mere excitement. Again, the "dull sweetness of repose" was closing round him, when gradually and steadily the bed-clothes were lifted from the foot upwards. He started, and a peculiar noise was made, just as he leaped from the bed toward the spot where his candle and matches lay. To strike a light was the work of a moment; he did so, and most carefully searched the bed, above, under, in and about, but nothing was visible. Every article in the apartment went through a fresh examination, but disclosed nothing new. The door was bolted precisely as he had left it. The chimney was almost too small to admit even a diminutive child, and nothing whatever denoted the presence of a mortal. Yet some one was present, and not only made noises but

lifted the bed-clothes. He grew greatly alarmed at first, but venturing a second attempt, plucked up his fallen courage. Darkness surrounded him again, and almost immediately that identical tapping, step, and breathing were audible. He could not be mistaken. He lay as still as possible until the clothes were again altogether lifted from his feet. With a spring he leaped towards the foot of the bed, but, except the vanishing and peculiar noise, gained no clue to the mystery. His courage now completely failed him, and having lighted his candle, he dressed, and prepared to leave the room a vanquished, dispirited man. It being far advanced in the night, he betook himself to the kitchen, intending to remain by the fire, rather than give any alarm; but there he was expected—a servant having remained up anticipating his defeat. Never did one mortal so downhearted and discomfited stand before another as that individual before that servant then and there. He could have fallen with shame rather than fright, and to his chagrin the domestic construed his perplexed appearance into the latter without allowing any admixture of the former. Having been conducted to another room he continued sleepless until morning, pondering upon the mystery of the night, and preparing himself for an open confession of the shock given to his boasted moral courage. In the morning the squire needed no explanation. Too much was plainly written in the haggard looks of his guest, and in consideration of his feelings he expressed a desire that no reference would be made to the night's proceedings, a course which, however well intended, annoyed rather than pleased his guest.

Some months after this practical conversion to a belief in "spirit manifestation," the friend in question, who earnestly wished to make his forced convictions general, and rather signalized himself in the effort, received a letter from the magistrate, in which was this passage:—"You will be amazed, but not more than I am, to find a solution for the spirit mystery. In fact, having so long trained my mind to consider the annoyance we have endured supernatural, it comes hard upon me to admit so simple an exposition of the whole thing as this: we employed lately a sweep to clean all our chimneys, and not excepting that belonging to the haunted room. When the little fellow got up midway in that flue he found a regular nest of valuable articles, jewellery, &c., some of which were mine, and some my next-door neighbour's. He brought them down, and explained that where the nest was placed happened to be a chimney-landing—the flue of the next house and the flue of the haunted room there communicating, and, at that spot, becoming one. Upon further inquiry, my next-door neighbours assured me, that until that discovery they were totally unable to ascertain where Jocko, their favourite monkey, was in the habit of hiding himself, and often for a night and day together. The fellow, you see, got up one flue and down the other, and by this means was able to elude any effort at detection. Well, just think what our spirit apprehensions have come to—a sweep and a monkey! one the mystery, the other the expounder!"

Any commentary on these cases, especially on the latter, would be a superfluous appendage. They, let it be remembered, possess the most prominent fea-

tures attributed to "noises," which have been lately whispered about in serious circles as "astounding." "Oh, what warnings, that this earth is nigh its doom!"

Before introducing the reader to the really modern developments of the mystery, or explaining its most orthodox manner of manifestation, we adduce some additional testimony to its want of novelty. Omitting here all further notice of continental cases—doubtful or certain, obvious imposture or improbable matters, such as they were—we come to this account of an occurrence at home, related by Baxter in his "Historical Discourses of Apparitions," as quoted by De Foe, in his "Life of Duncan Campbell" (p. 109): "There is now in London an understanding, sober, pious man, oft one of my hearers, who has an elder brother, a gentleman of considerable rank, who having formerly seemed pious, of late years does often fall into the sin of drunkenness; he often lodges long together here in his brother's house, and whensoever he is drunk and has slept himself sober, something knocks at his bed's head, as if one knocked on a wainscot. When they remove his bed it follows him. Besides other loud noises on other parts where he is, that all the house hears, they have often watched him, and kept his hands lest he should do it himself. His brother has often told it me, and brought his wife, a discreet woman, to attest it, who avers, moreover, that as she watched him she has seen his shoes under the bed taken up, and nothing visible to touch them. They brought the man himself to me, and when we asked him how he dare sin again after such a warning, he had no excuse.

But being persons of quality, for some special reason of worldly interest I must not name him."

None of the manifestations of these days is superior to the above—none of them better authenticated, and none of them, apparently, has more the effect of spiritual influence. We are not prepared to call it a sham, for it bears no fraudulent stamp; we are unwilling to call it a supernatural occurrence, though it contradicts our notions of the natural; but we at once pronounce it a mystery—though not a modern one. By-and-by, perhaps, this and other manifestations of its class will appear less associated with the incomprehensible than they now do; and if they will not admit of such a solution as was furnished by the monkey and the sweep, they may of one less ridiculous, but equally simple and natural.

CHAPTER IV.

THE NOISES BEFORE "CIRCLES" WERE FORMED.—CASES FROM AMERICA, ENGLAND, SCOTLAND, AND IRELAND.

> "There is a vagueness in the notion, sir,
> Which correct in time. Ere you do it tho'
> A few nuts—fair and foul—brings us forth
> And then——good luck go with thee."—BUTLER.

UNTIL within the last half century, these manifestations took no tangible form, but rather preserved a perplexing indefiniteness. When the "noises" were occasionally heard, a nine days' wonder only ensued, and the subject afterwards became confined to those with whom the unwelcome honour of its earliest development left a permanent impression. But the strange talents and peculiar tendencies of our American brethren always catch up and hold fast the very least indications of any novelty. Here was something not only fresh to them, but possessed of rare and exciting characteristics, precisely adapted to stimulate their propensities and feed their dispositions. The first case of any notoriety occurred in that country about the year 1834. We, however, prefer briefly detailing later occurrences, as they, and nearly all the important early American cases, are for the most part similar. These have besides the advantage of being modern. Chief amongst

the cases we allude to is that of Mr. Dods, a resident in Penobscot, United States. The first intimations he or his family received of the "favour" in store for them were conveyed by rappings in the wall—now here, now there—evidently not one second in the same spot. Although he—especially at first—deemed these noises very strange and very mysterious, their frequency deprived them of their greatest terror, and gradually reconciled the Dods' family to their determined continuance. Perhaps displeased at the growing indifference which the Dods displayed towards the "rappings," the unseen agency was driven to exhibit the presence of greater power. At all events, Mr. Dods got reason to think so. One evening, after having transacted some mercantile affairs in town, he was returning home "as sober as a judge," when he beheld the school-room which was near his home brilliantly illuminated, and, to all appearance, the scene of great festivity. Amazed that any proceedings, on so grand a scale as the aspect of the school-room denoted, could have been contemplated, much less going on, without his knowledge, he hastened to the spot, and all became suddenly dark — the stars quietly shining over-head — the school-house a gloomy spectacle, not enlivened by a solitary light. Under the natural impression that such a change could not have been so perfectly accomplished in so short a time, he rubbed his eyes to ascertain if anything had interfered with his vision, but nothing satisfied the search. He next ran to the door, thinking that the scholars, if they had, as was by no means usual, collected for a jollification, might have been induced to extinguish the lights upon

hearing that he approached. The opening of the school-door, and standing in the midst of the room, was the work of an instant, but a work which increased the wonder of Dods, as nothing was visible but empty benches, barely seen, and not a stir was heard. This was a variation in the manifestations for which the family were unprepared, and the mere rappings dwindled to nothing in its presence. But the rapping was also susceptible of a variation, and soon declared itself like a heavy metal ball rolling along the attic, and reverberating through the whole house. Not content with this change, a new phase was adopted, in the turning of tables, stirring of beds, running hither and thither of lights, and endless other similar singular demonstrations. We are told by Mr. Spicer, in his "Sights and Sounds," that the scene of these phenomena was visited by so many persons, that the Clerk of the County Courts, with his assistants, deemed it his duty to attend at the spot, and endeavour to detect and expose the trick, if a trick were detectable. Mr. Dods permitted them to select their own apartment, where they were left in quiet possession about 9 o'clock in the evening. Having taken every necessary precaution, and seen that it was impossible for any human being to be concealed in the chamber, or able to obtain admission without their knowledge; having also narrowly examined the entire apartment, and found it free from all machinery,—they retired, without having extinguished the candle. Soon afterwards, bed and bed-clothes grew so unmanageable, and went through so many strange freaks, that these men, without obtaining the slightest clue to the mystery, gave up the

adventure and its object as hopeless. It is said by an American writer, who visited the locality, that in the absence of Mr. Dods, the manifestations either did not occur, or so slightly as to be hardly perceptible. If then there be no mechanical agency, or no undetected "monkey operator," philosophers may deal with the case on the hypothesis that Dods was a great magnetic medium, from whose body poured nervo-electric fluid quite sufficient to cause these phenomena. This solution "hangs the better" on the fact, that in certain states of the atmosphere the occurrences assumed certain appearances, and were always subservient to the atmospheric influence.

Another curious and equally mysterious case was published in the "Newark Advertiser" eighteen years ago, worth recording here for one or two evidences it affords in sustenance of the hypothesis we have just hinted at. In the family of Mr. I. Barron, of Railway, Newark county, lived a girl who, in her fourteenth year, was mysteriously followed in all her movements by peculiar rappings. They were less when she stood farther from any metals, and more when brought into contact with those matters which usually excite or conduct electricity. Passing an iron-sashed window one day, an explosive sound, accompanied by a crash, brought some of the family to the spot, and there the poor girl was found in spasms, and all covered with the broken glass. Medical aid was instantly procured. Bleeding was applied, but in vain, and the noises continued, interrupted only by the weakness now and again seen to overcome the unconscious cause of all. The rappings always increased towards night, and decreased

towards morning—never occurred out of doors, always within. Various experiments were tried, and various remedies resorted to, without making the mystery quite clear, or removing the noises. On one occasion the girl was placed near a door set purposely ajar, and, in a minute, it flew back as violently as if shot by a cannon. But when a pillow, or any non-conductor, was placed between the child's person and the door, neither noise nor effect was discernible. From this and every other circumstance of the case, Dr. Drake, who professionally attended the girl, gives it as his opinion that the phenomena were electrical.

Before entering upon the "organized phase" of the history of these manifestations, we must briefly notice one or two other cases. The first—for which we visit Scotland—will form a *pendant* to the above, and concerns a Scotch child only eight years old; and happened during the summer of 1853, in a farm-house near Pathead, East Lothian. The child on whom these noises were too faithful attendants is far from "ordinary looking." She is said to own eyes "so wild and peculiar as to impart anything but a pleasing expression to her infant features." When the child was removed to a neighbouring village, the noises ceased at the farm-house, and followed her there. Policemen—sapient philosophers!—were commissioned to inquire into the matter, and reported (they should report something) that "the little girl had a knack of cracking her knee-joints and making these noises." Cracking knee-joints so as to make noises loud enough to terrify those who might be in the farthest room of the house! We

would suggest that these knee-joints should be preserved, as most extraordinary and valuable additions to the surgical museum, if not to the museum of "greatest curiosities." What of the sage policemen? They belong to a class which is by no means small, and as there is no likelihood at present that the species will soon become extinct, therefore we suggest that they "be borne with."

Passing away from this, one of the several cases which have occurred in Scotland, we subjoin an illustration of some of those which have been often —though not especially often of late—taken notice of in England. The circumstance to which we allude, a very recent one, and well-known in certain metropolitan circles, has been published in Mr. Spicer's "Sights and Sounds," without, however, for obvious reasons, any mention of names. A member of the College of Physicians, well-known in London, had occasion to visit Dorsetshire, where he called upon an old and valued friend, then under the care of two medical men, who seemed quite satisfied that their patient was on the eve of recovering from a very prolonged and severe illness. To all appearance, the state of the sick man justified their high expectations. But the eminent London physician discerned death beneath that mark of seeming improvement. From various symptoms, unseen by the others, he perceived that the disease had only quitted the joints and limbs to fasten its deadly grasp upon the vitals. Towards evening his practised judgment was sadly borne out, and the patient who, a few hours before, appeared so well as to need no longer the con-

tinued presence of his medical attendants, became suddenly worse, and before the night was over his life had fled. Every one in the house of course felt really awed, except the doctor, who, in consequence of the superstitious fears of the servants, was obliged to perform the last melancholy duties for his dead friend. As the sad office was near completion, a tremendous blow was heard, as if a heavy sledge-hammer had been struck upon the wainscot. The house seemed to vibrate with the shock, and the inmates glanced at each other in silent indignation at what appeared so indecent an outrage. The doctor ran to seek out the disrespecter of the solemn majesty of death. He searched at once, and searched in vain, for no traces of "mortal agency" were visible. The "insult," were it probable that at such a moment one could indulge in the desire of insult, could not have been from any domestic, as all were in the room with the deceased when the noise was heard. The cause remained undiscovered, and to this day the doctor is unable to assign a physical cause for the occurrence. We told the circumstance lately to two persons, one Irish and the other English, in order to ascertain their opinion. "Bedad," said the former, "'tis as plain as a pike-staff that his friends the gentry (bless 'em) war whipping 'em off. I 'd like to see the man that 'ud make me ate the notion that he went off right fairly. Sorra bit of honest dying was about it, good nor bad, whatever the doctor thinks the other way. If there only war the laste little dhrop of holy wather in the house, I 'll engage the chaps 'ud think a start afore they 'd kick

up sitch capers near the corpse. God be good to 'em."

The Englishman agreed with Pat so far as he understood the brief explanation, but appended his own "idea" thus:—"'Tis all nonsense talking 'bout his dying naturally. If there wasn't something more in it, what's the use of that there hammering you talk on? 'Tis plain to my mind, that the spirits of people have something to do with us here." We doubt if more learned men are not as deeply imbued with similar ideas. If Pat's fairies, and John Bull's "spirits," admit of other names in the vocabulary of the "learned," they certainly do not admit of materially different occupations, if we are to judge from modern manifestations of these notions. Of course we are to be understood as alluding only to those—and they are legion—who ascribe all "mysteries" to supernatural agencies.

From England we may be permitted to cross the Irish Channel, and land in the Emerald Isle, to take cognizance of a very singular rapping scene which happened there, before the "mystery" assumed its present professional importance. Although what we are about to relate has an air of romance, it is not therefore untrue. Although it cannot be said to illustrate rappings in general, it has its class, if not strictly like itself, as strictly the effect of equally curious and absurd causes; and, although Irish noises are invariably and at once attributed to elfish tricks, and heard by Irish ears where they could by no others, this case, and some more of late, have, thanks to American and English teachings, been placed to the credit of Satanic agency.

Charles Carthy, Esq., a young student of Trinity College, Dublin, possessed of more than common abilities, and less than usual family qualifications, aspired to the hand of a remarkably beautiful and amiable young lady. The student was gifted with those manly graces, intellectual endowments, and that exalted disposition, which are sure to gain favour in the eyes of all worthy acquaintances, and, not latest, with her whose preference he sighed for. They were attached, and, without a distinct explanation to that effect, or well knowing why, they felt pledged to each other. The pecuniary fortune and family position which our student lacked, the young lady was "blessed with," and this disparity was enough to shut her parents' eyes to the numerous good qualities of her suitor, and to close their ears to the earnest pleadings of a beloved child. When it was clear that the parents' decision was fixed, all communication between the poor disconsolate scholar and this unhappy child of fortune was suspended. The student repaired to America, to eke out an existence far away from scenes too faithfully reminding him of a lot tolerable anywhere but in their presence. Years passed by, and he returned to his native city, crowned with comparative prosperity, and a believer in "spiritual manifestations." His first inquiries were naturally after the family whose *hauteur* had driven him away. When he heard that they were "just as he had left them," the question at once presented itself, "Has not Miss Bourke been married?" "No," replied his informant, smiling; "you see that there is such a thing as fidelity. Six years have been added to her age since

you last saw her, but nothing to her charms, and nothing to her affection. Of course, I need not add there is no diminution of either, unless a little alteration in her appearance—I will not hint the result of her anxiety for you." Nothing could exceed the exultation of heart with which our student received this intelligence. Without waiting for a cooler moment, in the influence it produced, he at once dispatched a note, announcing his arrival, and expressing the profoundest admiration for what he could not help thinking was her heroic remembrance of him. Great was his joy, and profuse his thanks, when he received an immediate reply that she was unaltered, and that, as she was now of an age to think for herself, she had no objection to follow his directions, whatever they might be—bad they could not be, unless he were greatly changed. She also suggested that such directions might very properly—circumstanced as they were—comprehend a plan for what she termed a "legal abduction." "If," she concluded, "we get once safe from pursuit, we can be married without interruption, and the solemn proclamation may be made, that, according to all laws, I am yours, and yours only." The student was thoughtlessly hasty in reducing to instant practice a hint, which, on reflection, might create a great suspicion, and he forthwith arranged, and apprized her of the fact, that a carriage and pair would meet her that same evening, near her own house, and convey her to Blackrock, where he would be in waiting to join her *en route* for a clerical friend's in Wicklow, where it was proposed to remain until they might be empowered to travel together without fear of censure. He went to

Blackrock, met the carriage as expected, and with excess of words blessed and thanked "his angel." They drove off. As they did, every now and then a loud rap, sometimes resembling the stroke of a ferruled stick, sometimes like that of a swift hammering, startled the student. He looked, but through the dusk of night could read no reply to his inquiring glance in the countenance of his companion. The knocking, however, continued so perseveringly, sounded so peculiarly, and seemed so like the very noises which of late had disturbed and sent his imagination, as with thousands more, searching in the world of spirits for an explanation, that he grew uneasy and impatient. At length, thinking from the silence of his fair companion that she was almost equally amazed, he found words to ask, "What can it be?" "Ah! that's it," she replied, sighing; "I wonder you did not ask me sooner about it." "But I did not choose," he continued. "I felt that," she interrupted; "it is so like your old gentleness. I knew, however, that it must be spoken of some time, and these noises are only like little reminders of the unlucky fact." "What!" he exclaimed, terrified at the idea of being with a spirit medium, "you do not mean to say you are the cause, you a—a—" "Surely you must have heard of it," she said, endeavouring to calm him; "the whole city knows it, and you were hardly three days gone when it occurred." "There, there, there it is," he cried, startled by three sharp raps, "as like as can be to what I heard before. There again, you see it grows worse as you attempt to stir." "Of course it does; but why are you so astonished, you must have

mercy, what a—a—there, there again. Coachman, stop! stop!" and he wildly leaped out of the carriage to walk a little in the cool air, hoping that his excitement and horror of all spirit-rapping would subside. While he indulged himself so far, a carriage, driven at the "top of speed," was heard nigh at hand. He earnestly prayed that it might be the enraged father of his "spirit bride" coming to claim her back. It actually turned out to be the very man, pursuing his child,—not, as our student had imagined, for the purpose of claiming her back. but with the object of insisting upon an immediate union! "Oh, I see," cried the student, when he heard the exasperated father, to the close of his severe harangue, "you mean to punish me by consenting now, when your daughter is fit for no Christian man." "Sir, why then did you steal her off? Sir," continued the father, "do you think that if any worthy alliance could be made since her sad accident she would have been unmarried yet? Sir, 'tis only now, when no one else will have her, that you must." There was nothing complimentary in these threats, but there was much to fear for the comforts of one's body in the ready hand which placed a cocked pistol before the alarmed student, and extorted a consent to abide the consequences of this incautious abduction rather than those likely to attend a refusal. Better acquainted with Cupid than with Mars, the student struck his colours in the form of a timid consent. The entire party returned; and, on the way back, for the first time, our friend got the tappings very simply accounted for. Miss Bourke, it was told him, while riding in the Phœnix Park, a few days after her

lover's departure, was thrown from her horse, and had her leg broken. After a tedious illness, during which the injured limb was amputated, she recovered, and ever since has worn a false leg, which occasioned the rappings that alarmed her husband-elect. The explanation removed one horror to give place to another. The student, however, consoled himself with the notion, that, had he fled, as he had intended, without getting this explanation, he would have gone as mad as many who have sacrificed their reason to the spirit mania. We have only to add, that Mr. Carthy is now the sincerest advocate of the anti-spirit theory, not because of the above occurence—which, however, really crushed his blind prejudices—but because all he has heard, thought, or seen of the matter, convinces him that the phenomena, when a simpler cause is not discoverable, is traceable to electricity; and has nothing more Satanic connected with it than the heartless impositions it is made the channel of.

Before entering fully upon other phases of the subject, and in order to preserve an historical connexion, we must briefly mention that the first to convert the discovery into a plausible and very profitable profession were the Americans. Regular and recognized mediums became established there. Not the least important of these mediums was Mrs. Haydon, whose cleverness, however, has been cleverly detected and exposed.

CHAPTER V.

A GLANCE AT THE MODUS OPERANDI.

T. "What vulgar signs do these people speak so of?
R. Vulgar! Canst think no more of man's ingenuity?"
ROGERS.

THE "modern mystery" no doubt comprehends the whole phenomena of clairvoyance, magnetism, spirit-rapping, table-turning, and spectral illusions in every form. How are these produced? Whence arise they? Are they real or illusive? Are they the offspring of as yet unexplored natural laws, or are they the genuine product of deception and credulity? Let it not be unremarked either, that the believers are few, the disciples limited, or the secret in a nutshell; facts which three-fourths of the world overlook.

The normal condition of man is that of full and abundant health—health of body and of mind—*mens sana in corpore sano.* The opposite to this is disease, not of the incidental and usual kind, but organic and chronic. The functions disturbed, the tension of nerve and muscle relaxed, the cerebral system deranged, the stomach abnormal, and, as it were, teeming with vapours that wrap up and blind the senses, like the phantasma of sleep, all these

prepare an individual to think differently from all other people; to see in a shadowy manner; to receive strange and fantastic impressions, and to be affected by them. They are subject to electric and magnetic currents; and the fluids testify their presence in ways now so well known, that only the rarity and isolation of such abnormal cases render them comparative mysteries to the uninitiated, *i. e.* to the great body of the community. Insanity, in its mild forms of dementia and hallucination, is but another of the modes of this abnormal development. The brain-struck, the dupe to an exaggerated nervous temperament, believes as firmly in the fancies that beset him—vague, shadowy, and unreal as they are—as firmly as sanity believes in substance, weight, proportion. The demented milliner in Bedlam, waving her sceptre of straw, is as veritable to herself as ever was the Queen of Sheba, or even Victoria. These are suggestive enough of agencies acted upon by laws, chemical and organic, but also occult and unknown. What is our inference, then? Are the diseased, the nervous, the insane, to form, in their moral aspects and condition, such precedents and laws which, taken for granted, shall rule the universe, man, and nature, or are they simply exceptions, showing to us that things out of their common proportions, "like sweet bells jangled, out of tune," make a discord at once hideous and revolting in the sublimely harmonious working of the great universe, animate and inanimate?

These things occurring, however, where knowledge is rare, and science vague, fall under the observation of fraud and cunning. Some "medium" starts

forth, and translates words and actions to the wondering crowds; and the process of imposture thus begun, continues to accelerate, like a ball rolling down hill, till the surrounding masses are leavened with fear, and awed with a "blind belief in divinities," like the superstitious man of Theophrastus. There is a principle of epidemic in whatever verges on the supernatural; and the very fact that there is an absence of all reasoning, a negation of all judgment, and an implicit and unquestioning dependence on the part of witnesses and hearers, only aid in the propaganda,—fruitful as it is in all those moral evils which accrue to the world when deception is rampant, and credulity dominant.

Now belief, to be effective, should have the sanction of the larger number. Whatever can carry conviction must arise from a vast unity of opinion. That the "mystery of the day," starting first with a diseased condition of body and of mind, should have attracted so great a degree of attention, is the more to be wondered at, when we remark, how limited, after all, its sphere is, how few, comparatively speaking, the electrical agents, the odylic bodies, are. The magneto-dynamic forces appear to affect, here and there, a few solitary individuals; but as this furnishes a stock-in-trade to the "thirty thousand *media*" of the United States, it is a justifiable inference, that where there may exist a little truth, as connected with nervous patients, and persons highly obnoxious to electrical influences, there must also be a vast deal of cheatery and imposture practised among these same thirty thousand, to make so small an amount of wares go so far.

A gloomy cast of thought generates the same tenebrous fancies. A febrile constitution is creative and fertile in imaginings. What visions, what rappings, what converse with the shadowy spectres of another existence, what communings with the radiant Æons, or what ravings with demoniac images flitting like lost souls on the Plutonian shores, when a vicious life, and intemperance, has deranged the fine corporeity of matter and spirit, all these have and hold, the doctor, the nurse, the watcher by the sick-bed, know full well. Was the communion of Socrates and his demon *all* fiction? Did Swedenborg, in his rapt ecstasies, merely weave a tissue of falsehood? Have we not some faint, vague idea, all of us, that in sleep the soul has consciousness of another life, of dwelling with other essences, of "spheres," "zones," and "circles," as the priesthood of spirit-rapping phrase it? If we do concede to the theorizers very much that may go to establish the audacious claims they make, it is because we too know, that "there are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamt of in *any* philosophy." What then? That which they term supernatural we claim to be natural, the invariable results arising from the same invariable causes. Did the modern Psychopannichists ever draw more marvellous utterances from the spectral lips they would have us believe in, than are gathered from the lips of fever, or from a raving poet's rhapsodies? When Coleridge was under the influence of opium (which is far more marvellous in its working than the vulgarities of table-turning), he wrote a wondrous piece of melody, without meaning, known as "Khubla Khan." Is

there more meaning derivable from darkened rooms, where electric fires flash to and fro, from furniture overthrown, from a discord of horrible noises, or from the laughable replies given to questions, spelt in defiance of grammar, and spoken without logic, which *trance* after *trance* have eliminated?

To show how easy it is to arrive at darkness from light, to convert the common-place into the mysterious, and to ally disease with the demon, we could give examples enough. It is not against the *data* but with the *deduction* that we must protest. It is because the world take the initiative from the impudent assertion of the mesmeric or spirit-rapping quack, and asks not, or judges not for itself, that we feel our way cautiously in this dark labyrinth. We do not laugh or scorn men's hallucinations, knowing well how easily impressions, bright or black, are made. Here for instance is a case in point, extracted from Mrs. Crowe's remarkable work,—"The Night-side of Nature."

"Dr. Bardili had a case in the year 1830, which he considered decidedly to be one of possession. The patient was a peasant woman, aged 34, who never had any sickness whatever, and the whole of whose bodily functions continued perfectly regular, whilst she exhibited the following strange phenomena. She was happily married, had three children, was not a fanatic, and bore an excellent character for regularity and industry, when, without any warning or perceptible cause, she was seized with the most extraordinary convulsions, whilst a *strange* voice proceeded from her, which assumed to be that of an unblessed spirit, who had formerly

inhabited a human form. While these fits were on her she entirely lost her own individuality, and became this person. On returning to herself her understanding and character were as entire as before. The blasphemy and cursing, and barking and screeching, were dreadful. She was wounded and injured severely, by the violent falls and blows she gave herself; and when she had an intermission she could do nothing but weep over what they told her had passed, and the state in which she saw herself. She was reduced to a skeleton, for when she wanted to eat, the spoon was turned round in her hand, and she often fasted for days together. This affliction lasted for three years, all remedies failed, and the only alleviation she obtained was by the continued and earnest prayers of those about her, and her own; for although this demon did not like prayers, and violently opposed her kneeling down, often forcing her to outrageous fits of laughter, still they had a power over him. It is remarkable that pregnancy, confinement, and the nursing of the child, made not the least difference in her condition. . . . . At length, being magnetized, she fell into a partially somnambulic state, in which another voice was heard to proceed from her, being that of her protecting spirit, which encouraged her to patience and hope, and promised that the evil guest would be obliged to vacate his quarters. She often fell now into a magnetic state, without the aid of a magnetizer. At the end of three years she was entirely relieved, and as well as ever."

What would the medium have made of *this?* Would he not take her ravings as invocations, and

knowing the nature of a paroxysm, and its occurrences, would he not suit his subject or his question to the crisis and the hour? Or would he not give strong local colouring to what was thus uttered, and skilfully adapt such to the impressionability of his audience or hearers?

When spirit-rapping had established itself both in theory and practice, after so many years of slumber, it was found that, while being tedious, though startling, perhaps, it was empty and very limited. The following, for instance, while it embodies the whole essentials of spirit-rapping, its origin, range, and characteristics, shows also, as we shall presently see, that, large as was its scope and action, and wonderful as it might seem, it was also as equivocal as it was insufficient for all purposes. Mr. Hammond, a clergyman of Rochester (U. S.), details the particulars of a *third* visit paid to a family (the Foxes) in whose residence the mysterious sounds we now refer to had been heard. He says:—

"I was selected from half-a-dozen gentlemen, and directed by these sounds to retire to another apartment in company with the 'three sisters' and their aged mother. It was about eight o'clock in the evening. A lighted candle was placed on a large table, and we seated ourselves around it. I occupied one side of the table, the mother and youngest daughter the right, and two of the sisters the left, leaving the opposite side of the table vacant. On taking our positions the sounds were heard, and continued to multiply and become more violent, until every part of the room trembled with their demonstrations. They were unlike anything I had

heard before. Suddenly, as we were all resting on the table, I felt the side next to me move upward—I pressed upon it heavily, but soon it passed out of the reach of us all, full six feet from me, and at least four from the person nearest to it. . . . In this position it was situated when the question was asked, 'Will the spirit move the table back where it was before?' And back it came, as though it were carried on the head of some one who had not suited his position to a perfect equipoise, the balance being sometimes in favour of one side and then the other. But it regained its first position. In the meantime the demonstrations grew louder and louder. The family commenced and sung the 'spirit's-song,' and several other pieces of *sacred* music, during which accurate time was marked on the table, causing it to vibrate; a transparent hand, resembling a shadow, presented itself before my face; I felt fingers taking hold of a lock of hair, on the left side of my head, causing an inclination of several inches, then a cold death-like hand was drawn designedly over my face, three gentle raps over my left knee, my right limb forcibly pulled, against strong resistance, under the table, a violent shaking, as though two hands were applied to my shoulders, myself and chair uplifted, and moved back, and several slaps as with a hand on the sides of the head, which were repeated on each one of the company. During these manifestations, a piece of pasteboard, nearly a foot square, was swung with such velocity before us as to throw a strong current of air into our faces, a paper curtain attached to one of the windows was rolled up and unrolled twice, a lounge immediately

behind me was shaken violently ; two small drawers in a bureau played back and forth with inconceivable rapidity ; a sound, resembling a man sawing boards, and planing them, was heard under the table ; a common spinning-wheel seemed to be in motion, making a very natural buzz of the spindle ; a reel articulated each knot wound upon it, while the sound of a rocking cradle indicated maternal cares for the infant's slumbers. I felt a perfect self-possession, except a momentary chill when the cold hand was applied to my face, similar to a sensation I have realized when touching a dead body."

And now let us see how "spirit-rapping," under the judicious training of its media, created for itself new methods of development, and rendered the business of the medium more complicated. Between the souls of the living and those departed, we will assume, from the solemn yearnings, the promises of dwelling together in a future state, and from a number of other indications of a like nature, that, if there be no *direct* communion, there is ground to believe the *wish* for it exists. Now, if whatever difficulties lie in the way, be removed, if there arises one who can stand between, and interpret the question and the answer, tell the desire, and make known the revelation, the desideratum has at once its accomplishment. Whether we believe the fact or no, such persons have asserted themselves. The spirits are not to be controlled by the medium, though it would seem that they are sensible to entreaty, and that an excess of politeness is never thrown away. The medium cannot command a presence, nor, if there be a presence, can he compel its (alleged) usual

mode of signifying that it—that is, the spirit—is there.

Now, the alphabetical order of rapping is not only well known, but its tediousness has been experienced, and commented upon in many a daily journal. The progress made in this round-about manner gives some 240 letters in an hour. Consequently, as the method is diffuse, and time is exhausted, the most momentous revelations—none of the remotest consequence have as yet been recorded—can never be made, unless the communion can, like chapters in a serial, be "continued in our next." A sort of oral short-hand would have been desirable, only that the thing would be so full of breaks and incoherence as to render *that* impossible.

Philosophy resolves many difficulties. Perseverance conquers all obstacles. The proper study of the medium was spirit, and he ingeniously constructed a card, with the letters of the alphabet upon it, as an experiment, to be laid aside if it failed. We know not what we can do, like the Hibernian with the double-bass, till we try. During a communication between the medium and the supposed spirit, the former passed his hand over the alphabet, until he found his finger sensibly and irresistibly arrested at a certain letter, and so on, until the word, the sentence, was completed. What sort of communications these turned out to be, read all the works published on the subject, and—laugh.

The hand of the medium is thus calmly given over to the devices of the "spirit." This chronic power extends over its brawn and muscle, without aught that we know of intervening between. Sometimes

it is mild and gentle; sometimes violent and rude. At others it hesitates, and the digit hovers in suspense over the magic letters. These letters are spelt with immense rapidity for the most part, and the words, as spelt, are called out; and it is said that an expert penman would be puzzled to follow the dictation, when the "steam" is really on. To this system there arose many very serious objections; besides that, the revelations made through two mediums contradicted each other very flatly.

In this *modus operandi* of the revelation there was yet a hitch. Improved as the system was, it yet failed, after having worked well for a time, to satisfy the avidity of the curious. It was but a small difficulty to obviate, the trouble of being, in a manner, one's own decipherer. The same influence that could leave the spheres, through odylic attraction, with the medium, and compel his hand to spell a meaning and a phrase, could dismiss the more cumbrous machinery, and make the same hand write for itself. *C'est un fait accompli.* The thing was done; but no sooner had one written on this hint, than a score of writing mediums, like so many Richmonds, were in the field.

As credulity enlarged itself, in some degree, it must have puzzled the mediums to keep pace with its march. It was a bold hazard to urge a belief upon audience after audience, who assembled to behold a man sitting at a table to write, that he did this with an abnegation of self, with a negation of all will, and that what resulted was the effect of a plenary and spiritual inspiration. They explained its mysteries thus:—The spirit gave the medium mind

and hand. One is paralyzed, for the moment, the other is active. The hand thus active, is active only by the spirit power which urges it. There is a discrepancy about the manner in which this power is used, whether internal—by volition of electric currents through the muscular tissue—or by a sort of dominant but unseen outer force. In these things simplicity and plainness would lose their effect, and the result of a statement, simply and lucidly made, would have provoked laughter and scorn.

What wonder, then—if the appetite of the curious predisposes them to believe in supernatural agencies, in second-sight, clairvoyance, magnetism, and spectre-seeing,—that there should be no lack of food and provender for so rabid a taste? We know too well, that such a thing as being *en rapport* with a person can exist; nay, it does. Is not this the whole secret of the attraction and the repulsion of life? It is the characteristic of electric phenomena to exhibit itself in noise and luminous flashes. What can this have to do with rapping, card-spelling, and the like? Even the hierophants of the system do not explain the connexion. Admitting that "spirit"-rapping be a positive actuality, where are its uses, what its tendency, and what its value? If it be portions of an unexplained phenomenon, which has not yet attained full development, how is it that, with the discovery alone, the whole of its results terminate? Without entering here into the question of its propriety—without inquiring whether it is, or is not, portion of a forbidden and unholy art, we can yet feel surprised that, with so much parade, there should be produced such imbecile consequences for any tangible good—not to

speak here of those deplorable casualties which the annals of insanity or coma but too terribly point out.

The invention of a language for the spirit-spheres was a thing that might have been earlier hit upon. It is written by the medium, but in no recognized characters, antique or modern. On the shores of ancient Nile, no sign or carven stone, no mystic tongue of the priesthood, nor Coptic letters, give the faintest foreshadowing of it. A young lady (so says the "Spiritual Telegraph") translates this undiscoverable tongue into the sounds of a short sentence, "Ki-e-lou-cou-ze-ta," and again renders this Ethiopian serenaders' burthen of a chorus, to which it seems most alike, as follows:—"As heaven or the spirit-spheres are to be the future home of all mankind, so is knowledge to accompany them in the paths of wisdom; while peace and love, in a chain of goodness, shall bind the universal whole in the bonds of harmony." A very fine phrase this—"goot 'orts loot you," as Captain Fluellen said—and proves the compressible elasticity that can comprehend some sixty round syllables within six, and is doubtless the oral short-hand we lamented the absence of some few pages back.

They have, as a part of the mode, the incantation, and the invocation. There must be incense, adulation, and poetry too. As in the spheres they have music, and musk, ambergris, fans, and fine clothes, so have the neophytes an affectation of fumigation, singing, and other modern modes of divination. To contemplate the excessive air of satisfaction with which the geographical and social details of the circles and zones are given, is a matter of pure

wonderment to us, who have not the gift of singing, and whose imaginations are pitifully restricted, all, we fear, of small avail. Why is it that we hear so little of spirit-rapping just now, compared to what we did a few months past? Are spirits and professors gone to "star it" elsewhere? Is the delusion on the decline, and the system fallen in speedy decadence? Has ingenuity exhausted itself, and failed to go farther? One by one the pretences have been stripped, and laid aside. Collusion has been exposed, and the machinery of a rapping-table proved an ingenious knavery. Electric shocks, and the dislocation of knee-caps, have been more than spoken of, and *Poltergeist* himself has taken shelter in Franklin's Leyden jar.

They are not to be compared, we think, with the marvellous verities of Doctors Kerner and Reichenbach, in the matter of Angélique Cottin, and Frederica Hauffe. Truth is stranger than fiction, and catalepsy, somnambulism, and the like, are mysteries far more awful, we believe, than spirit-rapping, or any of the communications that have descended from any sphere. Between knowledge and ignorance a strong race is running; and whether this is to be an age of credulity and imposture, or one of calm inquiry, where doubt itself holds a reverend air, and scepticism shrinks abashed, as yet remains to be seen. Meantime, let us proceed with our investigation of the mystery.

CHAPTER VI.

FURTHER DETAILS AND EXAMPLES.

"And yet again, and yet again——
We come with pressing proof,
That all is not as it seems."—OLD PLAY.

WHILE considering the claims of the spirit-rappists, in every possible way, and giving them ungrudgingly all the advantages they can *prove*, and even more, the fact must not be overlooked, that all the marvel, the wonder, the astounding part of spirit-rapping, and its congeners, lie *less* in its *de facto* existence, and literal aspects, than in the prose-poetical colouring which the *littérateurs* of that doctrine have presented to an admiring, and let us hope, (or their labour is else thrown away) a grateful world. To read the writings of Adin Ballou, and of the spirit journals, gazettes, and other spectral bulletins of the States, is like reading a new revelation. The story of Cupid and Psyche —the splendid fables of old mythology—the gorgeous habiliments of the Arabian Nights, all pale "their ineffectual fires" before the glories thus indicated to our mundane eyes. Mystery is the arch enchantress in all things, material and immaterial; and so Zoroaster taught that fire was the principle of life,

and mounts upward to meet its lord and master; and Plato peopled space with a teeming mass of breathing creatures, the minute atoms of an invisible universe, surrounding and pervading even us. So also, according to the fanciful jargon of the old Platonic schools, fire, air, and water, owe their origin to the principle of the scalene triangle; that the earth is created from the principle of right-angled triangles; that sphere and pyramid symbolize in themselves the *figure* of flame; while air is figured in the octahedron, and water by the icosahedron, and the like; that the sphere images the beautiful and the true, as containing and comprehending all things and principles that are or can be suggested by geometric formulæ. Now, carrying out this principle of mystery, it is easy to understand the solemnities of the Eleusinian mysteries; the fulgid splendours, playing in keen and darting fires, as the great veil that separated the neophyte from the hierophant, in the Temple of Isis (the mysteries of knowledge only being foreshadowed); the sphinx-like riddle of the Coptic Zodiac, so easy of solution, being a meteorological alphabet of the seasons, better explained in symbol and hieroglyph than by any other known method. It is easy to comprehend the thirst to know, the awe with which the ardent approached, such lofty secrets as these, and how Delphic Apollo, Dodonian Oak, Ephesian Diana, and Roman Sybil, became, in the eyes of the unlearned world, the august impersonations, and the incarnations of mystery, which in fact they were.

It has been thus through every age downward. The human mind is the same. Its senses, passions, and extremes of belief and doubt, precisely the

same, only that the conditions are changed. We now learn for ourselves, and trust little to tradition. The experiences of past errors warn us, and that which comes to us with all the pretence of a mystery about it, we gaze coolly enough at, however ghostly the aspect of the thing may be, and we question it, examine it, probe it, wonder at it, perhaps, and feel baffled, but we call it no mystery. Whatever it may appear to be for a time, but not for long—sooner or later we shall know it for what it is, and in another instance discover that our knowledge of the laws of natural phenomena is by no means as complete as it is desirable that it should be.

Now, it is the laws of spirit-rapping, table-turning, and intercommunion, that we are at present in doubt about. We do not deny the possibility of all these three taking place, and being among the uncommon occurrences of life, but we do not go so far as to insist upon their existence either. The due regard we owe to truth, the knowledge at least that we have of the infinite mutations, and the continued new forms of matter, fresh combinations, and still other ultimate elements, science and discovery, should deter us from anything like dogmatism, either to assert or to deny. Spirit-rapping, table-turning, and magnetism exist, and do occur, without doubt, that is to say, *so called* "spirit" rapping. Why is it necessary that this process, so ludicrous, these spirit communications, so jejune and vague, so contradictory, and so destitute of the meanest logic, these magnetic phenomena, and the electric affinities which are subject to the laws of the physical universe, should be attributed to supernatural interference, and have a

supernatural origin? They are not a whit the more respectable, and, in the majority of instances, lessen the reverence that we intuitively pay to the awful voices of the soul, when in prayer, meditation, and in dream, the eternity beyond the grave discloses its grand and imposing portals to us.

We term the best known of those forces which rule the material world—the laws of gravity, and so on—by the word physical. It may mean nothing direct, but it implies all. Like the great Pan, it is the comprehension of all that is scientific, natural, and in accordance with all human experience, from the days of the Deluge and onwards. Chemical forces, those of light, caloric, magnetism, all belong to the physical. Higher in the scale, and less known to the learned and the scientific, are those forces termed *vital*. Under this term are comprehended the succession of seed time and harvest, the ripening summer, and the vigorous winter that cleanses, preserves, and purifies the ground, and gives it those nourishing virtues which make the great bosom of nature so benign and beneficent. To this belong decay and reproduction, and, with it, life and death are as the opposite poles, of a certainly most mysterious circle of precession. Beyond these relations to the vital force are those of the brain and nerves, the phenomena of will, and the muscular volition that waits subserviently upon it. *Will* but to raise the arm, or lift the leg, and it is done. There are organic forces, too, quite independent of the will. The systole and diastole of the heart, the diffusion of oxygen through the blood by contact and absorption, the peristaltic motion, and the convulsive cramp of

epilepsy, which is a derangement of the general working of these forces, are so many familiar illustrations.

Because, however, these are organic, and because they do act and work with a miraculous accuracy, for the space often of "threescore years and ten," there must be something acting on these—heart, lungs, brain, and viscera—which is equivalent to the will. What is this supplementary power then? What renders us liable to generate caloric so largely, and to become transmuted in abnormal instances into so many Leyden jars, so many gymnotic eels, unless it be that force termed by Reichenbach as Od, or Odyle, that is, allied to the nature of magnetic electricity, but regarding the sources, nature, qualities, and extent of which, the philosophers have not yet decided? The spirit-rappists have been premature in their conclusions we think, and speaking of them and their theories, with all the respect we can muster, we would say that they had been led by their very vivid imaginations to step aside from the path of truth, unintentionally, very likely, and, in order to account for what was else unintelligible, settled the doctrine of spirits, spheres, and the like, and so produced the prolific results already seen, but which results we must take leave to say are like exchanging a good golden sovereign for twenty of the most spurious shillings that ever came from the forger's crucible—and hence, saddling us with all the consequences of being duped.

In the spirit-spheres there is a progression through degrees of perfection, until the expiating spirit, gradually leaving aside its grosser weight of impu-

rities, finally arises at the highest acme of that refulgent glory its starward aspirations are bent upon. There is nothing to quarrel with in this theory, if, as the indication very strongly points out, we are content to dispense with Scripture, and conform to a new revelation, published in the United States, at the "Penny Celestial Spheres' Journal" office. The idea of expiation is agreeable to the sinner, supposing it to be tenable ground *after* death. On the other hand, we require better proofs, a larger amount of information than we know we possess, before we can subscribe to it. Ignorance and fanaticism will always become proselytes to the most agreeable doctrine—and to do away with perdition and the pandemonium of lost souls, is the first step to win their favour; but, unfortunately, we cannot annihilate St. Paul's by denying its existence, or proving in the Aristotelian fashion that it never was erected.

We learn from old writers, through the pages of Gibbon and others, that the monks of Mount Athos had a singular method of throwing themselves into ecstatic trances, of dreaming dreams, and dwelling in the bosom of an hallucination that infolded them like a glory. When alone in the cell, they closed the door, and seating themselves apart, sought to raise the mind above all things vain and transitory. Reclining beard and chin on the breast, and turning eyes and thoughts to the region of the navel, they sought there for the seat of the soul. At first, all was comfortless and dark; but perseverance brought by degrees an ineffable joy, and no sooner had the soul discovered the place of the heart than it was involved

in a mystic and ethereal light. On this account those harmless ascetics obtained the name of Quietists, till their idiosyncracies were scattered to the winds by edicts and violent hands. Anarchy displaced *Estatica*, and the soul became troubled and dark. This mystic and ethereal light we should add, was asserted, and believed to be synonymous with the luminous transfiguration on Mount Tabor.

The crystal, the drop of water, the fixing the eyes upon an object so long that there ensued a certain temporary derangement of the nervous orgasm, is so evidently allied with, and the clear precursor of, animal magnetism, that no arguments seem necessary to prove the intimacy of the connection. Jamblichus, who was the theosophist of the Platonic doctrines, bears apt testimony to the alleged divine *afflatus* pervading the enthusiast.

"Man," he says, "has a double life, one annexed to the body, the other separate from everything bodily. . . . In sleep we have the capacity of being wholly loosed from the chains that confine our spirit, and can make use of the life which is not dependent on generation. When the soul is thus separate from the body in sleep, then that (latter) kind of life which usually remains separable and separate by itself, immediately awakes within us, and acts according to its proper nature, . and in that state has a presaging knowledge of the future." Then, omitting a distinction between sleeping and waking inspiration, and coming to the latter, in which, also, the *afflati* have a presaging power, he proceeds:—"Yet those (latter) are so far awake that they can use their senses, yet are not capable of

reasoning, . . . for they neither (properly speaking) sleep when they seem to do so, nor awake when they seem awake; for they do not of themselves foresee, nor are they moved by any human instrumentality; neither know they their own condition; nor do they exert any prerogative or motion of their own; but all this is done under the power and by the energy of the deity. For that they who are so affected do not live an ordinary animal life is plain, because many of them, on contact with fire, are not burnt, the divine inward afflatus repelling the heat; or, if they be burnt, they do not feel it; neither do they feel prickings, or scratchings, or other tortures. Further, that their actions are not (merely) human, is apparent from this, that they make their way through pathless tracts, and pass harmless through the fire, and pass over rivers in a wonderful manner, which the priestess herself also does in the Cataballa. By this it is plain that the life they live is not human, nor animal, nor dependent on the use of senses, but divine, as if the soul were taking its rest, and the deity were there instead of the soul. Various sorts there are of those so divinely inspired, as well by reason of the varying divinity of the inspiring gods as of the modes of inspiration. These modes are of this sort—either the deity occupies us, or we join ourselves to the deity, &c. . . . . According to these diversities, there are different signs, effects, and works of the inspired; thus, some will be moved in their whole bodies, others in particular members; others, again, will be motionless. Also they will perform *dances and chants*, some well, some ill. The bodies, again, of some will seem to dilate in height,

of others in compass; and others, again, will seem to walk in air." To be insensible to pains, prickings, shakings, &c., is to be in that condition so familiar to us all when a patient is seized with convulsions, cramp, epilepsy and the like, and the frenzy of inspired dancing, are as well known to the scholar who has read of the Corybantes, the Mænades, and the Bacchic rites, as to the young who have read of David in a sacred *furor* dancing before the ark.

Now, the spirit-rappists scorn to be outdone by the dancing manias of the middle, and of even later ages, familiar to the readers of history. Could such an important section of spiritual, angelic, or demoniac phænomena be by any possibility omitted? As the mediums have made over to the spirits of the spheres, all the modern musical instruments in vogue, and have heard the ravishing concerts which are there held, it was but natural that those among us who were at all *en rapport* with the denizens of the spheres should follow an example so worthily set in old traditions, and in the annals of witchcraft.

As "Rapping" was speedily superseded by the card alphabet writing, by clairvoyance, and by other forms of the spiritual presence, dancing soon followed as another phase of manifestations, and it was remarked that those affected by the spiritual impulse illustrate the manner and the individuality of a deceased person so faithfully, that those acquainted with the departed recognize the person at once. All this is very pitiful, for, admitting the whole to be true, from the spirit down to the dancer, through every grade and agency, what satisfies us?

what good, what benefit, present or to come, are we likely to obtain?

One locality of the States can boast of a hundred persons who have been thus influenced. They comprise persons of all ages. They must have music too, and the strains of Strauss or Jullien give animation to the dances thus said to be impromptued. Is it not gratuitous, however, to attribute anything here to the spirits? Where is the difference, we should like to know, between the dancing of one assembly where the spirit *is*, and of another where the spirit is *not?* Possibly the spirit-dance is known by its eccentricity, its movements as often graceful as ungainly. "Eccentric" is the word used to express the same. There were impure dances in pagan times, as in the early days of Christianity, so its vilifiers wrote it down. There was the Witch Sabbath of the Brocken, where dances under baleful mastery were held. Pass to-day through some Hindoo jungle into the sacred space where the temple stands, and there they yet hold their orgiac dances. The horrible obscenities of the New Zealand dances in their Morai are on record. What do they say of the low *salles* of Paris, and the *cancan*, whose repute is more than enough—what of the casinos of London? What amount of seduction is required to ally impurity with delusion, vice with ignorance, and the strong ruling hand of knowing cheatery and guile, when it has such plastic material to work upon as the gullibility of the public, as well as its heedlessness, and its insatiate appetite for novelty in any form?

These dances we hold then to be among the most equivocal portion of spiritual manifestations we know

of. Analogies from the same cause and effect, deductions from the same veritable premises, are *never* wrong. The very inclination to be contradictory is proof of the rule, and of our assertion. We do not accuse these people of erecting schools for crime, but why do they or their spirits make such an easy peace between evil lives, and a lenient future—nay, a perfect "happy land"—as they do! Is it from conviction? Human hardihood, even with a knowledge of the laws of the Creator, can live, and *has* lived a life of profligacy and crime, has even "cursed God and died!" Are we to learn now that a knowledge of the moral and religious laws hinder a man from being the high priest, the hierarch, the tutor and the teacher of vice? To the plausibility of the "spirit-rappists" is added a great deal of shallowness. We must not permit systematic vice to become an adjunct to immoral growth, even if we are premature, in being doubtful and suspicious.

We must, however, return awhile, in order to examine as closely as possible the analogies that may exist between the od· or electro-magnetic force, and the so-called spiritual influences, and whether the one is not easily convertible into the other, the mysterious giving way to that, which if not thoroughly known, will not so far elude us, but that study, experiment, and minutest examination may disclose all that as yet remains hidden.

It is held that the forces are visible and invisible, they are also voluntary and involuntary; and while the voluntary forces are, in a greater or less degree, under cognizance, the involuntary are not, and hence it is that their working constitutes a mystery; the

occult powers that influence them belong to the phenomena of the unknown, and as a corollary when seeking to know their nature, we either give up the search, or assign it to "spirit manifestations" at once, and so for ever settle the difficulty by a designation it does not define. We act rashly and illogically, thus to establish an evil precedent which bolder theorists take advantage of, and so erect a cumbrous and unwieldy edifice of superstition which becomes finally more confounding than the multitudinous incarnations of Vishnù, or the myriad-sided forms under which Hindoo mythology seeks to speak to man.

Desiring, however, to obtain some insight into those vital forces which move tables, chairs, &c., and induce coma and the like, and which are so closely allied to the productive principle of life, we ascend to loftier grounds of inquiry, and on all sides around us the horizon enlarges itself. Experiment proves that the vital force which gives rise to a rotatory or progressive motion in an inert body, has some reference to the electrical conditions of the agent that acts, and the factor that transfers the energy from the person to the substance. There is in the turning of the table an unconscious muscular action, without doubt, exercised. This unconscious muscular action has a tendency, like all motion gravitating round a centre, to be circular in its operations, such as we observe in the tendrils of certain plants, whose magnetic affinities with light and heat may have a common origin with those of the vital force referred to. We observe singular instances of a vital and involuntary force actively at work in persons who have received

a sudden injury. Shot through the heart, a man has made a convulsive leap he could not otherwise have accomplished: animals struck at the region of the brain, have spun round and round: the paroxysms of insanity, while being perfectly involuntary, indicate an accession of the vital force equivalent to that possessed by four or six robust men in a normal state of physical health. Is it to be wondered that under a condition (nervously) familiar to us, the energy of this power, as in the battery of animated hands laid on the table, should exhibit latent forces and unknown powers never before dreamed of, and flow in a plenteous magnetic current through the fingers, and that four or six persons, whose united strength, *voluntarily* exercised, would not have sufficed to move a table, should yet *in*voluntarily compel it to whirl, and to move onwards as though it were a toy in a child's hand?

It is to the delicate experiments and to the persevering course of observations undertaken by Reichenbach, that we are chiefly indebted for having thrown some light on the subject by his theory of the Od force. It is to this theory of a resistless current—an invisible but extraordinary agency which is not electricity, nor magnetism, but which partakes more of the character of the latter than of the former—that we may assign the origin of the involuntary and "vital" forces which have puzzled more than the "spirit-rappists" themselves. Who would suppose that in experiments made upon the magnetic currents of the muscles, this (Od) agent, "while playing among the rain-drops of a summer's day, can shake the earth and the very heavens?" Who-

ever imagines that because Reichenbach was not capable of such mastery over his discovery, as that of showing his "Od" capable of making a table dance, it is not after all the said Od that does it? It is not always clear that analogy and fact are seen in all their integrity and value. Odic smoke or ether can be made to play luminously on the *surface* of bodies, but he must be a bad arguer, and know little of the theory of atoms and the porosity of the most concrete substances, that will assert this ether to be incapable of mingling with matter and thoroughly permeating it. Trivial discrepancies can only modify to superficial eyes the fundamental facts, just as exceptions prove a rule. If we have at the least got a clue to natural phenomena that may dispense with spiritual agency, let us make the best of *that* as more consonant with reason. The palpable may glide into the impalpable by such gradations as have no discernible line of demarcation, but they are connected and related, as the brain to the brawn, the will to the deed, the soul to the body.

The literature of spirit-rapping, table-moving, and the like, is not the least curious part of the matter under debate. While it appears steadily to ignore mere vulgar matter, so many corroborative, as well as correlative ties of relationship peep out now and then, as clearly show a lack of decision, and a latitude of allowance. The very fact that spirits meddle in what we may term the hucksterings of our physical tax-paying, bread-earning existence, shows some such contact with the material that is, to say the least of it, suspicious, and calculated to throw doubts upon the intact impalpability spirits may lay claim to.

In closing this chapter, we cannot, we think, do better than give our readers a specimen of this strange literature, and of the logic of the "spirit-world." The work "Light from the Spirit-world," (of course, of American origin, to "go a-head" after the most consistent fashion,) is asserted to be written without the exercise of will or volition of any kind. The medium did no more than submit himself to the *afflatus*, or the influence of the spirit he was in communication with. The hand was surrendered to the spirits, the will was suspended, and the medium became an automaton for the time. It is professed to have been published without alteration or correction of any kind. This we will implicitly credit, for the following specimen of spirit eloquence satisfies us that in many respects, especially those of composition, meaning, and grammar, the mortal is immeasurably superior to his shadowy kindred in the spheres. Here, then, is a luminous exposition of the spiritual idea of wisdom, the premises, argument, and corollary of which we should be very glad to see contravened, if there exist one daring enough to venture on the desperate attempt of challenging a spirit on his own ground:—

"Wisdom is Wisdom. All is not wisdom. All is not folly. Wisdom wills good. Folly wills otherwise. One is right. One is wrong. Wisdom will do right. Folly will do wrong. He that is wise, let him take heed. He who is unwise, let him get wisdom. And let him get it where it is to be found. Let him not seek for it in the folly of fools, but in men of understanding, in spirits commissioned by God, to give light to those who grope in darkness.

Let him cast off the shackles, tear asunder the false robes, rend the galling chains, and burst the bonds that enslave his captive soul. Let him launch his mind into the stream of wisdom flowing from the mountain of God, and bathe in the limpid waters, that he may be healed.

"Wisdom is not selfish. Wisdom is not partial. Human wisdom is both. Men are considered wise, but their wisdom is comparatively foolishness. Men are wise only as they gain knowledge. Men are unwise when they neglect what they need to make them wise. Men are wise when they do good—unwise when they do evil. Men are wise in what they know —unwise in what they do not know. Knowledge of God is wisdom. Knowledge is power. Knowledge is good. Knowledge will save. Knowledge will cure. Knowledge will do what ignorance cannot do. Hence knowledge of God is the wisdom of God, the power of God, and the goodness of God. Neither could wisdom exist without God."—*Light from the Spirit-world*, pp. 39, 40.

The names of Paine the truculent, Calvin the uncompromising, Edgar Poe, the poet, whose genius was so brilliantly erratic, and whose great talents were obscured, alas! by degrading vices, of Washington, of Franklin, of Adam Clarke, and of others, occur plentifully as dictating despatches from the spirit-world. A strong current of worldly wisdom and the craft of the earthly wise run through them. They savour of self-interest, and are as transparent as the Visions of Mahomet, who in trance beheld what he wanted ordered for him by the fiat of Gabriel, or any other handy *deus ex machinâ;* or precisely in the same

manner that the Mormon leaders have the *nous* to assign for their own uses, through prophetic revelation, the choicest goods of the community, the high places of life, and all the advantages that can accrue to cunning, when it has elaborated itself into a system, and asserts mastery over blind belief, ignorance, and error.

One more extract from these spirit-metaphysics, and we enter upon another part of the subject. The "Mind" is the theme thus loftily descanted upon:—

"The noble powers of mind, how much debased to the production of thought bemeaning to its purposed dignity!

"Mind, the quickening principle of which originates in God, and is designed to range the majestic universe, to gather strength from every dropping sand within its sphere—from the contemplation of every moving atom in the vastness of unmeasured space—from the animating principle of every living thing—from the lote and mollusca, through the ascending degree of higher life and expanding intellectuality, to the flaming seraph who attends the Creator at His throne—in man is wounded by the deadly and demoralizing nature of sin against goodness, and is thus prevented its lofty ascent; and, being impelled in pursuit of fancy pearl by the motive force of evil, is rendered a penal slave to vice, prejudice, and vain ambitious life. Hence, from its secret chambers is poured forth a chaotic mass of garbled vindictive imprecations, terminating in oppressions, ambitious cruelties, and the catalogue indicative of a mind in perfect wreck, driven and

dashed against the fatal rocks that rend in sunder the noble form and despoil the garnished soul of the human body.

"Mind, designed to harmonize in its own movements, and in ascension wing its way through portals of wisdom, bearing along by attraction the weaker elements around, is crushed and welters in gore at the base of the mountain of sin, and, tending to the dark abyss, drags with it that embraced by the power of its influence."

Do you not admire all this, good reader? Are you quite insensible to the taste, the propriety, the prose-poetry of these ambitious sentences? It must have been a love of hard words and sounding syllables alone that could not content itself with simple expressions conveying a simple meaning. But what would you? If spirits do speak or dictate, we cannot expect them to indite, or otherwise act like your mere mortal. What, in that case, would their superiority consist in?

The reader will have observed that we have not attempted in these chapters, nor do we intend, to elaborate details of the mere process of the table-rapping. Our object is much more to examine its value, because its mere design and manner of operation and purpose are infinitely better known than its internal character.

CHAPTER VII.

SPHERES, CIRCLES, AND OTHER THEORIES.

"No class of bold inventors is likely to be incapable of designing plausible premises on which to work."—JEFFREY.

IT would scarcely be fair, perhaps, to omit all notice of that remarkable system of spheres and circles which the ingenuity, or the prophetic foresight of the American seers has constructed, not only with some skill, but with a considerable amount of imagination and true poetical feeling about it. Having invoked spirits, and finding that they are tractable, it was nothing but just to invest them with a "local habitation," besides a name. This they have done, and we "admire at it," as they themselves might say, for having some knowledge of the "Metamorphosis," and being slightly conversant with the marvels of Oriental lore, it is something to find even these vast and fanciful fabrics outdone, and that a structure—more gorgeous and dreamlike than that region the "Fairy Queen" dwells in, more Elysian than the enchanted palace of Armida, more perplexing than Circean isle, more Dantesque too, in a few features of awe and horror, than Dante him-

self—can exist between us, and those shadowy ones who come with electrical apparatus under their arms, and "fright the isle from its propriety."

The visions, the angelic intercommunications of Swedenborg are tolerably well known, at least, by report. Most of us have read of that race of Eastern assassins who acknowledged a chief that seduced them into a belief of his paradise of beauty, voluptuousness, and joy, a "paradise of fools," manufactured out of "hatchis," potential drugs, and an imagination kindled by the semi-mystic splendours of Arabic and Saracenic tradition, the most gorgeous arabesque in its texture, perhaps, of any in the world.

To dwell in a world of dreams is what men of a far more practical cast of mind than the enthusiasts of our day even elaborate out for themselves. To exist in that *dolce far niente*, bathed in sunshine, soothed with ravishing music, and caressed like another Bottom by a radiant Titania, to live in those visions of boyhood and youth, till all is lost in the waking trance of life, striving, struggling, panting, fighting, like so many Homeric heroes in the strife, and where such dreams come never more; to surround one's self with such beatitudes as these, has not only been physically superinduced, but such a life is actually akin to that of your real dreamer by day as by night, to that awful somnambulism experienced by Coleridge and De Quincy, when "being *in* the world, they were not *of* it."

This may be a disease of the mind, or a disease of the body, for it may not matter much whether of the twain while the same result is produced. In these instances, the entranced know no corporeity. They

will surrender the material for the immaterial without a protest at the unfairness of the change. They will take phantom shillings in return for the solid gold, and only when they waken from their trance do they begin to find out what fools they have made of themselves; and all that they have to do, taking into consideration the barren state of their exchequer of reality, is, to close the eyes again, and "sleep out the thought on 't."

Such a fanciful theory of an impalpable and immaterial life of dreams as this, might be suggested by such a work as the "Alciphron, or Minute Philosopher," of Bishop Berkeley; and last, not least, the mysticisms of Swedenborg afford sufficient data, with "ample verge and space enough" for the establishing of any number of the like rhapsodical theories upon which the imaginative may fall back, and invariably digest in lack of better provender. But with a larger latitude, and with a greater affectation of the definite, the professors of the manifestations have erected on these a plan as plausible as imposing, which we give in, as nearly as possible, the original words of the professors themselves:—

"Commencing at the earth's centre, and proceeding outward in all directions, the surrounding space is divided into seven concentric spheres, rising one above and outside the other. Each of these seven 'spheres' or spaces is again divided into seven equal parts, called 'circles,' so that the whole 'spirit-world' consists of an immense globe of ether, divided into seven spheres, and forty-nine circles, and in the midst of which our own globe is located. . . . The good, bad, and indifferent qualities of

the spirits located in these seven separate spheres are carefully classified. . . . Those of the first sphere are said to be endowed with wisdom, wholly selfish, or seeking selfish good. 2nd. Wisdom controlled by popular opinion. 3rd. Wisdom independent of popularity, but not perfect. 4th. Wisdom which seeks others' good, and not evil. 5th. Wisdom in purity. 6th. Wisdom in perfection, to prophesy. 7th. Wisdom to instruct all others of less wisdom. According to the new philosophy, when a man dies, his soul ascends at once to that sphere for which it is fitted by knowledge and goodness on earth; and from that point ascends or progresses outward from circle to circle, and from sphere to sphere, increasing in knowledge and happiness as it goes, till it reaches the seventh circle of the seventh sphere, which is the highest degree of knowledge and bliss to which it is possible to attain in the spirit-world. They assert that heaven is beyond all the spheres, and represent the change from the seventh sphere to heaven, as equivalent to the change from the life on earth to a dwelling in the lower spheres. They are ever advancing and growing better. They can descend through all the intervening spheres to the rudimental, and help their tardy brethren *up*, yet their low or vulgar spirits can never pull their more advanced brethren down."

There is in the audacity of this system of spheres something that engages the attention, and had Plato described his ideas of a life that, according to him was *ante*, as well as *post mortem*, with the same minuteness of definition, we should have had

many a learned contest upon its various features, many a commentary, many an explanation, and many a rendering of sentences dark or puzzling, while the huge heap of tomes which the Platonists of later days presented to the world, ere they folded themselves in their mantles, and turned their faces to the wall, might have been multiplied to infinity by the momentous import of what partook of the nature of a revelation, regarding that immortal home of the gods and the heroes, where the asphodels blow for ever, and where there were many mansions, and more chambers, to which the golden house of Nero bore as much, imaginary, resemblance, as a child's toy-box does to Somerset-House.

But to see the air of sublime and cool indifference with which the Sacred Scriptures of two thousand years are set aside, awakens other feelings than that of mere astonishment. The indications of totally dispensing with the word of God, and of necessity implying with a new heaven and earth, a new Scripture, like another Book of Mormon, have something sinistrally suggestive about them. There lies beneath this surface, matter of which we should like to know more. If the alphabet of the spirit-lore be at the outset so startling, what will it foreshadow when the first rudiments of its teachings are being propagated? Men may reject the Bible, as many do from conviction, and a conviction, however, wrong, if honestly and sincerely felt, must always be entitled to respect. If we look on the Brahmin, or the Mussulman—cultivated in other respects as their intelligences may be—as being in the darkness of error, we may deplore that error, but we do not

attribute to them false pretensions, or the advocating a creed they have no faith in themselves. To insist upon a plenary inspiration that is independent of God, of angels or ministering spirits is no new thing. Such enthusiasts, such fanatics, such delusions have existed. We ascribe such at once to the fervour of an imagination that is diseased, and to a judgment that has been warped. When, however, the propagation of theories so monstrous, is cool, methodical, and matter-of-fact, we do not credit the conviction demanded, but look for the latent knavery, the lurking design cloaked under it.

To "regard sin as immaturity of development" is to become its apologist. To make this a specific ground of argument is the converting of a paradox into an axiom. When it becomes desirable to disguise a principle that might at first startle and shock one by its dark sterility of aspect, and by the infidel nature of its tendencies, the only mode to do that is, to use a sophistical casuistry, which concealing the doctrine really in course of teaching, till, being absorbed, the real nature of the falsehood begins to appear. The bitter pill may be conveyed in honey, but the leaven of its bitterness will not be the less for that.

Modern spiritualism, which is singularly enough, as a contradiction in terms, nothing more or less than a practical materialism, rejects original sin, as also original holiness. The revelation of the Bible, past or future, has no existence for it. It promises a new millennium, and introduces us beforehand to the spirits of the circles, with whom we hold converse, such as men hold on 'Change, in the market-

place, or the news-room. The common affairs of life are debated with all the acumen of the Stock-Exchange. Its claims to impeccability are wielded with skill enough, and rhetoric enough, and display the ingenuous air of candour with which its propounders deplore the unfitness of some mediums, the worthlessness of others; but the fundamental truths—that is the groundwork of all—whether attended by success or failure—draw attention to the doctrine only, which, "assuming a virtue though it have it not," is destined to accomplish its purpose on the credulous and the ignorant.

With an Eclecticism, too, which may flatter the disciples and followers of all schools of philosophy, the spiritualists have absorbed, in the form of motto, metaphor, or precept, the best, and the most *ad captandum* these schools offer. Of a divine origin they say nothing—nothing direct, if anything indirectly. If one likes to infer some unexplained connexion, or some essential emanation that may mount upward to the centre of all created things, he is left at liberty to do so, but following the revelations of the spheres, this is soon lost sight of.

The "Supernal Theology" speaks of a high degree of social affability existing among the dwellers of the zones—whist, music, dancing, together with very praiseworthy efforts in the educational rudiments of reading, writing, and the like. There is "no marrying, or giving in marriage," among them, but every spirit "has its partner of the opposite sex." They have seldom been united upon earth, a fact that implies a love of harmony, and a distaste to recommence any past connubial bicker-

ing that may have existed. These partners, however, have, for the most part, known each other, been intimates, friends, relatives—what not? Separated wide as the poles though they may have been at the period of decease, a mutual attraction brings them together in the spheres, so that we see here one reason why the spirit in one upper sphere seeks with such earnestness to assist its friend, companion, or lover, from the lower to the higher grade.

They dress too. A phantom Manchester weaves and spins for them. A shadowy West of England factor prepares them cloth. Unsubstantial pigments dye these asbestos fabrics in the hues of the rainbow, and the male spirits wear beards, which is a triumph over popular opinion not yet achieved among us, despite the strenuous efforts made for the extension of the hirsute innovation. The bodies of these spirits, too, have a corporeity, and are really as material as our own. The matter, of course, is of an opposite and distinct nature, which is a conclusion that even the Bishop of Cloyne, with all his mental materialism, or his immaterial mentalism, scarcely ever hoped for.

The ingenuity of the following fanciful style of architecture ought not to be lost sight of. If the spirits are practical in their tendencies—and we assume too, much to their reproach, that they have been a long time about it—why should we not borrow a hint? The editor of a "spirit" paper has given lectures on the subject through a medium. Here is their summary:—

Dwellings may be erected of a material formed by mixing with sea-water, iron ore, triturated granite,

clay, and sea-sand, in equal proportions. Thus we shall very likely have the adamant, diamond, or steel walls we have read of in those impossible fairy tales that fascinated childhood. The model is to be formed after the human body, seated, and the inhabited part is to be the cavity corresponding with the cerebral structure. In warming this house, no fuel will be necessary, for the heat will be generated in a manner analogous with the circulation of the blood. At the basement, and of the same materials —the new adamant—a boiler is to be fixed in framework, to contain a jar made of zinc and tin, with two wires to represent arms, and fire-fingers tipped with brimstone (easily supplied from the sulphur mines of Sicily, or the craters of Etna) continuing therefrom. Linseed oil is poured into the jar (they will require an "oil-man" too), and the wires being excited, and caloric fed by the combustion of (deodorized, we hope,) sulphur, exhaustless and perpetual heat is generated. All this is amusing, if not of vinous origin, but it would be a pity to spoil the sequence.

In order to aggregate these vestiges of an insane creation into communities, a circular park is laid out in the empyrean. Within it is a circular church and a round-about school, with a triangular roof over all, though against *what* is not rendered definite. These will be surrounded by a circular street, and the houses will form "circulars" around them. "We are at first angular," proceeds the architectural medium, "being in the first stage of development, but the second form is circular; and when we come to take the second step in the advancement of art, we shall have nearly all arrangements circular,"

which we conclude is a state of perfect happiness all round, reposing like the elder Saturn, in sublime torpor, folded in a hoop like the gymnasts, who trundle themselves for the gratification of the public, and their own good, through the streets.

Again: the only motive power existing and extant is that of the Will (of this we shall speak elsewhere), and it is by means of this that locomotion, animal or machine, is evolved. A wicked wag, commenting on this, suggests that the editor of "The Universal Hum" shall speedily produce his paper printed without the aid of hands, by looking into the office and nodding his (brazen) head at the press.

By the same rule—the "Supernal Theology" proceeds to tell us—the spirits "have the power of creating whatever they desire. Whatever robes they desire to wear, they possess with the wish. They paint, sculpture, write, or compose music, and their productions are as tangible to them, as ours to us. The artist by means of his will paints a picture, and shows it to his friends, as really as it is on earth; and the poet writes, and finds admirers of his verses, as he would here. They enjoy whatever they desire, and this is one of the sources of their happiness. They eat fruit, or whatever they incline to, and indulge their appetites—not, however, from necessity; they never feel hunger or thirst, or cold or heat. . . If they wish for a harp, they at once possess it, and it is a reality—a tangible thing—and, to their perception, as much a material substance as the things we handle here. When they no longer desire the object, it is a nonentity. They do not lay it by, to

take it up again, but the idea remains, and they can recall the thing, as it were, in its perfect identity."

Is not all this, we venture to ask, going more than a mere step farther than audacity? Does not this creative will and energy, so gratuitously assigned them, hover very near the confines of blasphemy? We will not say that there is wilful or premeditated insult to the Creator here intended, but we will venture to say that zeal to make out a good case, to dazzle, to astound, and to convert, may have led the medium a step too far, that his imagination bore him off into latitudes of thought and expression which he might afterwards lament with tears of remorse and anguish. Who knows but that in those terrible cells existed no reason, and frenzy is cast from the sight of man and daylight for ever; but foremost in the raving conclave may stand the medium that hazarded such fallacies as those to which the Elfland and its inhabitants, as bodied forth in the "Midsummer Night Dream" of the poet cannot for a moment be compared, although we all thought them so matchless.

Adin Ballou, one of the most eloquent and zealous hierophants of the "Supernal Theology" sums up, pretty much as follows, the more positive and recognized form in which the spirits develope themselves to mortals:—

By knockings, rappings, imitations of well-known sounds, musical tones, and even articulate speech, but very low and faint, and more like the sighing of an echo than aught else. By giving motion of an odylic, magnetic, or spirit-nature to inanimate sub-

stances,—tables, chairs, doors, &c., which motions generally convey an idea of intelligence governing and limiting such movement. By overcoming with ease the most ponderous weights, and the most positive resistance. By opening and closing of doors, playing airs on stringed instruments invisibly, by writing through a medium and the like. By exhibiting signs of beatific as well as demoniac possession. By causing catalepsy, epilepsy, and other involuntary counter-muscular suspensions and activity. By trance, clairvoyance, second sight, and spectre sight.

By having, at times favourable to electrical agency, the power of making themselves visible to the material eye in part or as a whole. Sometimes a diaphanous hand is seen, a phantom face, or the perfect form. Sometimes they are sensible to the touch, and a cold corpse-like contact is the result, when possibly the tenuity of their forms may have become so far condensed, as to be felt like a cold vapour, or even in a still more positive degree, of semi-corporeity.

Finally, by the exhibition of an earnest and affectionate yearning after the future welfare of those in the flesh, they warn them of approaching calamity and evil by signs and omens, by dreams and revealings. They bear messages of consolation, and are capable of acting, if brought into magnetic *rapport*, in a medicinal manner upon the nervously diseased, and thus heal many acute disorders that the flesh is heir to. Like the Daimon of Socrates, or the dual principle of good and evil within us all, they hold arguments, expound tenets, discuss questions of morality against the animal tendencies to immo-

rality, are able to indicate momentous truths in philosophy and science, and are otherwise intimately and closely connected, and in a manner interwoven with the destinies of the human race.

So much, then, for the agency and extent of spiritualism, as its expounders have set it forth, and teach its doctrines, to all that have ears to hear, the will to learn, or a conviction to throw away. Pondering over what we have perused of these spiritual theories, systems, creeds, and modes of existence, in the popular sense, we cannot but see that, being thus brought into abrupt contact with the world of disembodied spirits, neither wakens that awe, nor arouses that reverence, we have derived from the sanctities of early religious education, and which have grown with our growth, and strengthened with our strength, from the hour we imbibed our mother's milk, and fed upon her earnest teachings. The road to the spirit-land has too much of Macadam and the turnpike about it to please us. There is a topography of dues, poor-rates, and the like, in the whole arrangement, that is too statistical for the soul, in its occasional forward-looking over the fields of a future existence, to pasture upon. The region is arid. There are no divine dews, and cedared lawns, azure waters, or the communion of "the just made perfect," visible in the whole horizon. The scheme is that of a poor-law guardian, who patches up fragments, as in old Tudor houses, to suit expediency. All solemnity, all awe, all that is transcending in the scheme of the life to come, is diluted, and we already feel that if *such* were indeed the elements and conditions of its endurance, that weariness and

languor cast their shadows ahead, as if to show us the limit of the bliss we pass through the terrors of death for. Even now the energies of the human mind scorn the restricted limits of the whole supernal theology. No throne! No elders round the throne! No Apocalypse, august, mighty, and inexpressible! Why, we feel as if competent to enter the spheres at once. We *can* write, we *can* spell correctly, and the rest. What sort of conditions has frenzy in its ineptitude, then, condescended to?

The pneumatic theory, very ably advocated, we candidly admit, by Mr. Beecher, does not resolve itself into anything more satisfactory than the theories already glanced at. It is, indeed, like a "physical theory of another life," but what was majestic and ennobled in its material proportions, in the hands of Isaac Taylor, collapses under the treatment of the Supernal Theologists. We do not think it would be difficult to hold that polytheism was a nobler system than this last. We do not object to any pneumatic theory, to any psychologic plan which may avail in explaining to us those phenomena, which, so far beyond the reach of the material sciences—yet visible to sense and feeling—as to elude us, and enter the confines of the immaterial. There are, and have been, states and conditions of animal life, of so contradictory and paradoxical a nature, as for a time to sanction the wildest fancies, by their combination with these theories; but, it must not be forgotten that these conditions occurred *first*, and that to explain them the theory was invented after. As these phenomena are of long and distant intervals, the data and particulars of the

first are passed away and forgotten, or only so dimly recollected as to confuse rather than assist. A defect in the theory that explains must, of necessity, be filled up; and, hence, the most erratic of speculations have taken so much the tinge of truth as to be mixed with it, while it is often mistaken for truth itself.

From the conjunction of Pneuma, Psyche, and Soma—spirit, soul, and body—results the man in his entirety. To define, however, the nice distinctions which exist between the two former is by no means easy, even if possible. If, for the sake of definition only, we assume the spirit to be that emanation from the Almighty which, breathed into man, constitutes him a "living soul," the soul itself may also be taken as the aggregate of his intelligence, of his moral faculties, perceptions, and the like. The body is but a temple—a lodgment—a shop—an aggregate, or set of tools and instruments, to work *with* and *in;* while the harmonious combination of the whole, in justly-balanced proportions, resolves all senses and sensuous functions into *one* comprehensive sense, that, in proportion to its superiority over the animal, perceives clearly, acts rightly, judges truly, and otherwise asserts its high and heavenly origin. It is during the temporary suspension of the physical powers, by trances, delirium, morphiates, opiates, and the like, that the faculties of prevision, the phenomena of clairvoyance, and of spectre-sight, are produced. We are not going to decide whether these faculties are real or pretended. To a certain, even to a great extent, we admit their possibility: for what are dreams, and the "visions of

the seer," but something of an analogous nature? We are endeavouring to see what probabilities exist in their favour. From what we do know, or can acquire, we may progress to what we do *not* know, and, by inference, and a comparison of effect with probable cause, be the better able to judge.

Three principles, already mentioned, forming the man, pervading and surrounding him, co-exist with him, through the contingencies of life, to the limits assigned by the Psalmist, until the muscular system is worn out, and the nervous organization is exhausted. Then the psychical, or odylic, fluid retires still more and more into the interior, according to theory—to the seat of the soul, wherever that may be. The principle that circulated life and warmth is now still and torpid. Death ensues. The luminous particle quits the body. Our earthly life is over, and that of the spheres is begun.

Here, however, we are told to behold the impalpable link that binds the human to the immortal, in the theory known as "Palingenesia,"—or that regeneration of particles, which the metaphysical chemist has seized upon as his own, and which the believer in apparitions clings to with such eagerness,—in order to hurl it at the head of the materialist, and, in convincing him of the reality of apparitions, defeat him with his own weapons. The phantom atoms are impalpable, too, only to the eye of the seer assuming form and substance;—palingenesy, or the reproduction of things from their primordial atoms, proving the limitless durability of matter, till, lost in the infinitesimal of divisibility, it partakes of the nature of the immaterial. We refer the reader

desirous of fuller information, to works on the subject, where he will find all detailed to his perfect satisfaction—perhaps. At all events, it will be seen that we are very candidly conceding to the professor of magnetism and of inter-communion with spirits, all he insists upon, from which he can, as he does, make the most of.

That the impalpable, and, in a scientific sense, the imponderable can be resolved into material solidities, is not to be denied. The two gasses of hydrogen and oxygen, with a third other eluding element, form water. It is an instance as trite as that "two and two make four." We are still conceding very liberally, perhaps, and must beware of admitting too much. We agree with him however as to mystic emanations. We admit a sympathetic or magnetic *rapport* between spirit and spirit, embodied or disembodied—between mind and mind. Affinities of this class are still among the unexplored marvels of nature; and, in the zones surrounding the earth and the planets, who knows whether the sylphs the poet sang of, or the demons and souls of heroes, as the Platonists aver, do not wander in their qualified degrees—whether the idealists have not hazarded correctly? We may deny, because to prove may be practically impossible. Metaphysically speaking, it is impossible to prove the *truth*. *That*, at least, must be self-evident, and taken entirely for granted on its own grounds and pretensions.

Mormonism is not a very old affair, nor are its pretensions greater than those of any other sect that has caused dissension in the world from time immemorial. And we suspect that physical well-doing,

and larger fields for the investment of capital and labour, had a greater share in its development than any genuine conviction of its being a creed "pure and undefiled." But Mormon literature increased and multiplied, as was absolutely necessary that it should. The aliment that drew around the founder disciples and converts must still be supplied, if even in a changed and enlarged form. Extensive, however, and varied as that literature is,—singular, grotesque, aping the sublime, and sinking into bathos,—it bears no comparison with the multiplicity, or with the continued increase of the spiritual literature, since those refreshing serials were first hit upon. From the presses of every corner of the States, known or obscure, came the flaming oracles, printed every-how, every-where, and multiform—consistent, contradictory, virulent, mild, equable, or chaotic.

The serial gave place to the volume, in point of importance; but the former held ground by giving "continuations in our next," and in announcing fresh correspondents in the spirit-world, without the least hesitation, till the whole was reduced to the regularity of the post-office. Nor have we observed, except in the *trances*, that the spirits have been at all backward in coming forward with "matter" or "copy." In that respect they might set a good example to many an indolent *litterateur* of the day. Criticism is a favourite pursuit, and spirits gravely pronounce posthumously upon those that have left the earthly scene, but for whose reputations they seem to have the tenderest care. Shelley vindicates himself by proposing some remarkable blank verse, which

would have made him "tear his hair," had he perpetrated it living. Tom Paine is as mild as a "sucking-dove." The "Telegraph," a spirit weekly paper, in a "communication from the interior,"—that is the phrase, for they "speak by the card, lest equivocation should undo them," which equivocation *does*,—condescends to notice our translation of the Scriptures. "The Bible, a great part of it, would be right, if people would only give the right construction." (We agree with the spirit too.) "When the Bible was first translated into English, it was misconstrued; then, I judge, great mistakes were made in that operation. There is, I think, a great many good things in it; so I think part of it must have been translated wrong."

Literatim et verbatim! And we can only say that the grammar is surpassed by the logic, both being among the most marvellous specimens the accidents of these latter days have brought us in contact with.

Any person, accustomed to the perusal of a serial, as it appears from time to time, must know that its grand feature of attraction must be novelty, variety, and the like. Subject after subject, article after article, by author after author, appear, and the consequence is that there is a perpetual sparkle and freshness kept up, or that *ought* to be kept up, for the sake of circulation, and securing to it readers. Just so it is with the literature of the supernal theology. Dr. Adam Clarke discourses on the doctrine of affinities in a wonderful manner. The theory of attraction with him, does not in the material world draw like to like, so much as it aggregates opposites. And he says distinctly, that "all pairs are not

mates," which perhaps no one will disagree with. In a communication, anent one Mr. Partridge, a familiar spirit, *hight* Jack Waters, says, "I luve you, for you are onest," which makes us admire "Jack Waters," phantom though he be, also. Benjamin Franklin, who never was in a hurry in his life, communicates, without what might have been accompanied by "excuse haste," an announcement that "the project which has engaged our attention for some years past, has at last been in part accomplished. I am, &c." This is as satisfactory as the oracle of old, that foretold the same fate to a man whether he would, or would not, act so and so; but if, by any chance, this profound mystery *can* be unravelled, let us hope it may cast some light upon the Eastern question, or any question just now much complicated, unless, indeed, it has some explosive design, wrapped up in a non-conductor case; and, if so, better leave it as it stands, lest it do more mischief than the philosophic old printer ever, in his eventful life, dreamed of.

CHAPTER VIII.

A DIGEST OF OPINIONS, PRO AND CON.

A medley of precious products ———
——— the speculations of many minds."

NORTON.

WHEN we desire to arrive at a correct conclusion upon any debatable point, where there exists so much difference of opinion, as, instead of splitting the disputants into two parties, may split them into twenty, the task is involved in difficulties. Extrication from error, or a glimpse at the truth, becomes hopeless; and such is the unhappy variation of opinion that surrounds, and besets, this "Mystery of the Day." Twenty different theorists head twenty different sects, and a concentration of purpose and of idea is demanded, for the due examination of these pretensions, which must be of a far more cool and impassive kind than we can pretend to possess, though the course to be followed is clear enough.

First learn the nature of each opinion, and, contrasting them, see how many unite together, and place those authorities apart. Cast aside at once the frivolous and the unimportant that stand aloof on puerile grounds. It is but seeking for the grain of wheat in a bushel of chaff. Having obtained

something like two dependable parties in opposition, it becomes then a duty calmly to weigh, to examine without prejudice, and to arrive at a conscientious conclusion. For the most part, such a conclusion is nearly the right one, if not actually so. For the most part, too, the majority decides correctly. The instinctive voice of public opinion may be always taken as a fair indication of the truth. *Our* opinion, of the pretences of the "spirit-rappists" to supernatural origin and sources, is decidedly of a negative kind. We will venture to say, that a vast, an overwhelming majority will testify with us too, and reject their claims totally. And now let us see whether the balance of intelligence is not also with the side we have taken. The very starting-point, namely, "spirit-rapping," from whence all other offshoots and branches of the system have sprung, proves to be one fatal objection. The mode is low, ludicrous, and vulgar; and we shrug our shoulders at that form of the dread and the appalling—at that contact with a denizen of the interlunar spheres—when a line from some "nigger" melody realizes the whole practice :—

"Who's dat knockin' at de door?"

Even from their own side of the water comes a voice of protest and of warning,—"A voice potential as the duke's," more so than that of any medium's.

"Alas!" exclaims the American, Hawthorne, in his "Blithedale Romance," when touching incidentally on the subject; "Alas! methinks we have fallen on an evil age! If these phenomena have not humbug at the bottom, so much the worse for us.

What can they indicate in a spiritual way, except that the soul of man is descending to a lower point than it has ever reached while incarnate? We are pursuing a downward course in the eternal march, and thus bring ourselves into the same range with beings whom death—in requital of their gross and evil lives—has degraded below humanity! To hold intercourse with spirits of this order, we must stoop and grovel in some element more vile than earthly dust. These goblins, if they exist at all, are but the shadows of past mortality, mere refuse stuff, adjudged unworthy of the eternal world, and, as the most favourable supposition, dwindling gradually into nothingness. The less we have to say to them the better, lest we share their fate."

This gifted writer does not condescend to argue with what he looks right in the face with calm but quelling eyes, and calls it "imposture" at once—that is to say, imposture in the form and manner it has been placed before the world.

There is one out of two feelings or sentiments which we may suppose the inquirer to entertain when he goes to visit the medium,—belief or disbelief. As for those that are neuter, and we cannot think they are many, we may suppose, and the supposition is generous, that they will be fairly divided. One half whole believers, the other wholly sceptics. We know that "some who go to mock, remain to pray;" and it is possible for the most cool and logical doubter, finding his fancies so bewildered by one of those coincidences that, while being in the common category of fortuitous accidents, has yet an aspect and an air of reality and conviction as defies

questioning, and baffles examination, to surrender at once. Now, when a man, with the full intention of discovering a fraud, and exposing an imposture, returns converted and convinced, we may rationally conclude that what he first doubted in is no imposture, but a fact; that its claims are those of pure and unadulterated truth. Belief is not far off, and the work of conversion would rapidly extend. The spirit-rappists say that such instances of conversion have occurred among their sceptical visitors more than once or twice.

Those who are uncertain on a matter like this, but who have what may be termed "preconceived notions" in its favour,—or what Mr. Lewes (of the "Leader,") denominates a "dominant idea,"—are likely to be most favourably acted upon. Every rap is pregnant with a mystic signification. Every success, however trivial, is one more "confirmation, true as word of holy writ." They lose sight of the important phase of the subject,—its grand and comprehensive relation to the human soul and its destiny. They are absorbed in the minor details of a manipulation and a jugglery which to them assume the importance of the chief argument itself. Such people are of the weaker class. The *pia mater* is of a soft and impressionable nature, and it is from among these that the great body of believers are drawn.

Mr. Lewes, therefore, boldly calls the whole process a trick. Forgetting at the moment that a visit to the medium is that of testing the truth, the visitor suffers his attention to be distracted as the conjuror obscures his sleight of hand by transferring your

notice from his act to some trivial thing of glitter and of show. He insists that the questioner supplies the answer; and as this is one of the easiest tricks of palmistry and other gipsy craft, there is not only reason but truth in what he urges. The result of his own visit to Mrs. Haydon, so amply detailed elsewhere, if not known, should be familiar to every reader. The whole is the *reductio ad absurdum* of a grave and specious pretence. The clairvoyant tricks of a penny show are not more hollow.

In opposition to this, however, arises Dr. Ashburner, as the champion of Mrs. Haydon. Seeing the somewhat contemptuous manner in which the "Leader" treats Mrs. Haydon and her pretences, with some indignation, he insists that "sex ought to have protected her from injury, if you *gentlemen* of the press have no regard to the hospitable feelings due to one of your own cloth, for Mrs. Haydon is the wife of a former editor and proprietor of a journal in Boston, having a most extensive circulation in New England. I declare to you that Mrs. Haydon is no impostor, and he who has the daring to come to an opposite conclusion, must do so at the peril of his character for truth! I defy Mr. Lewes, or any one else, to prove the acts of imposition or fraud in the phenomena that require the presence of such a medium as Mrs. Haydon for their development. I have calmly, deliberately, and very cautiously studied this subject. It may please superficial thinkers to treat it as they long treated mesmerism and clairvoyance." Now with Dr. Ashburner we do not yield in our respect for the sex, neither do we think, that those under whose care, in

a manner, lies the welfare and morals of a community, have so insulted Mrs. Haydon, by their doubts and by their exposures of what they considered, and with excellent grounds, to have been an imposture of the most unequivocal nature. Is sex to be a protection to those who exist upon design and fraud? Shall we respect a *charlatan*, because it is in petticoats, and because the trick is clothed with an astuteness, the more dangerous, that it implies abilities and talents of a more than average kind? If we are on our guard against those creatures who sap the morals of the young, who set snares under the feet of our wives and daughters, what shall we say of those who propagate a principle that has led to insanity and crime? There is a limit to respect. There is a boundary to tolerance. Success alone can, in the eyes of the world, render fraud respectable; but when to imposture is added the disgrace of failure,—the absurd crime of being "found out,"—let censure and blame be dealt out as a strong sense of justice and of responsibility instinctively suggest.

One of the American mediums, a Mr. Cooley, of Springfield, has the candour to admit that these phenomena are of human origin; that they are the result of electric or magnetic conditions; and that there is every possibility of reducing them to demonstration; and as this mode of solution is gradually obtaining ground, it is probable that the tone of the "rappists" will gradually lower in proportion as they find themselves unsupported. Man, however, is an impartial creature, and especially when his curiosity is excited. What he cannot decide upon

for himself, he feels thankful if any other will do so for him. Because his knowledge of magnetic laws is restricted, he lays experiment and observation aside, and accepts the spirit or the fiend as the orpifex of the dark work he witnesses, and the transition from angel to demon is as easy and natural as the fall from the sublime to the ridiculous.

Is it for any such reasons as these, let us ask, that the Rev. Mr. Godfrey propounds his, "not to put too fine a point upon it," monstrous theory of Satanic agency, energizing itself in the inert legs of tables, and finds the spirits of the swine synonymous with epilepsy and madness? His questions *not* responded to would favour this supposition; but it is the mischievous tendency of the day, when beginning to entertain these things, to stop short at nothing. The appetite becomes voracious, and must be fed; and to do justice to the nurses, they prepare the morbid food in ample quantities enough. "The table," says Mr. Godfrey, "was more sagacious than a dog, and more obedient than a child;" and we are reminded of the wooden automaton of the old experimentalist. If cultured intelligence, and a study of theological doctrines which neither vary nor change, in time or eternity, can descend to this drivel, and propound it as a dogma, where is the limit that can be placed to the speculation of fear or ignorance?

Mr. Godfrey enters into the field of incantation. Bubble cauldrons!—sing kettles!—wave the magic staff! "My impression is, that the placing the hands on the table is a sort of incantation. By it

the sitters signify their wish to be brought into communication with the spirit-world. They sit until they are observed by some one of the wandering spirits, who thereupon enters the table, making it crack at the moment of its entering in. The reason why it will not obey any commands, *unless hands are placed on*, has suggested an idea, which, if it be true, is a very solemn one. It occurred to me, while writing, that the table '*moved simply by the laying on of hands.*' 'This moral nothing,' (the table,) '*on the imposition of your hands begins to live!*' Can it be that this is the beginning of Satan's last struggle, that *on the imposition of hands* the table is endued with power from the devil, as the Lord's servants, *on the imposition of hands*, were, in the apostle's days, endued with power *from on high?* I merely ask, Can it be?" And echo, resonant throughout surrounding space, repeats the question, without obtaining even an Hibernian reply in return.

The Rev. Charles Beecher has produced a very clever book on the subject, which, with its "cloud of witnesses" from the pagan and ancient fathers downwards, adopts the divine *afflatus* in the form of a pneumatic, or rather a psycho-pneumatic theory, by which he not only accounts for all the phenomena that the spiritual, the demoniac, the odylic, and other theories account for, but also for those where they are insufficient. On the whole, however, this is but a rustling tissue of speculations, arrayed in frailest splendour.

To refer again to that power—quite as unaccountable too as any yet spoken of—denominated the WILL, and which we made mention of in a former

chapter, we may detect in it something analogous to the force which has turned tables, and heads as well as hats. The power of the will is subtle enough to elude any correct or definite analysis. It has the machinery of the body under control, but is itself controlled by organs of which it may, perhaps, be the essential produce, Hand, arm, and foot are subject to it. The artizan manipulates under its domination, and is not astonished at the almost miraculous results these agents of an invisible despotism produce. In striking a blow, and while in the very act, the descending member, armed with the heavy hammer, tempers that blow in an instant of time, and while it is full of the impetuosity first given. In such cases as this, the "will" directs a succession of blows, which are kept up as long as the muscles are not exhausted. When weakness and exhaustion ensue, the will may still exist as a surplus essence; but as the agents for the time fail, the will remains, in a manner, powerless.

Now the odylic force very likely *is* this "surplus essence" passing off in currents by the nervous tissue, while the muscles remain impassive. Will and essence are, to the observer, impassive, intact, and invisible, but the domination of the will may superinduce coma, or produce the turning of a table.

The disturbance of the law of equilibrium produces the phenomena which only persons in an abnormal condition have power to exhibit. The law of demand and supply is exhibited in combustion, when fire is fed by the oxygen of the atmosphere. Something analogous to this combustion is perpetually taking place in the body. The caloric of the blood demands

support, and it attracts its affinitive essences from the exterior air, while the food in the interior of the stomach is being converted into blood and chyle. The muscles, having recovered their tension, again succumb to the dominancy of the will, and a repetition of will and act follow as before.

The magnetic power then is that essence flowing out of every healthy being, whose corporeal faculties are in a state of a supreme and positive harmony. It acts consequently upon its negative, on the abnormal, on the diseased, and the like; and therefore having a more tangible ground to work upon and to theorize, we are willing to acquit spirit or demon of participation, and to look into the unexplored arcana of nature for an explanation of our farther difficulty.

In explanation of a phenomenon somewhat more ultra than usual in table-turning, we have a theory that is about twice as difficult to digest as the spiritual influences. The phenomena itself amounted to this:—

Five persons made a chain round a table, and, out of the five, three, it appears, had power over the table individually and separately. It obeyed spoken commands, and performed, to order, such feats as the following:—"Turned, stopped, turned in the opposite direction, tilted *to* and *from* the person commanding, *remained* tilted up, rose on *one* foot, and, by order, rose on two feet, and *walked!*—verily," writes the experimentalist, a lady, "verily walked—to the door, advancing one foot before the other, in distinct steps, and again walked in an opposite direction: this, with the power only of my hands!" And so

far this is gratifying, that the lady needs no agency from the spirit-world. Now for the explanation :—

"A very clever Hungarian," says Mr. Spicer, "and one of the most powerful European magnetizers, says that the method of this action is in the vital principle of the wood, *which is modified to carry its vital force as we can ours, and so our magnetism lays hold of its structure, and can give this dead vegetable organization some of the principle of our living one.*"

We feel disposed to suspect both the feat and the explanation, yet we cannot wholly deny the former, and the hypothesis of the latter is tenable, if not clearly proven. With regard, therefore, to table-moving, and its kind, we think that the engrafting of a certainly strange law of dynamics upon the spiritual system is somewhat gratuitous, if not altogether so. Tables move and hats turn—but it is necessary that this motion should be other than from a superabundance of the magnetic-muscular essence. In the course of our reading and investigation, it will have been seen that Odylic influence is independent of contact, and the transfer of merely mechanical force from the hands to the table—eagerness, dread, or curiosity, so absorbing the attention as to distract close observation—these, with a tendency to adopt sounding phrases, and specious theory, obscure the reason and blind the judgment. When Professor Faraday, in a temperate and able letter written to the "Times," sought to give an explanation of the miracle, a cry—the effect of this blinded judgment—was at once raised up against his interference.

Why could not the Professor's suggestion, if it did not satisfy the multitude, at least set them on a reasonable course of experiments? Has it done so? Has he not, on the contrary, been twitted for his scepticism, and the narrowness of a philosophy that, knowing the value of exact laws, adhered to them, as he had done before in matters equally mystifying, and proved their sufficiency? The mathematics of nature are disdained by a public that, too often, in its restlessness, and its insatiate appetite after the marvellous, would forego all healthy food rather than resign a novelty, until, like a new ribband, it was worn out.

The mode in which the "Leader" refuted the pretensions of the rapping mediums, *brusque* and tolerably convincing as it was, does not apply to the whole extent of the phenomena of intercommunication, whether that be by electric, magnetic, or spiritual agency. A writer, taking exceptions to the alleged proofs of exposure, insists that Mr. Lewes in no way explains the well-attested cases recorded in American literature. Let us for a moment have reference to that portion of it which is authentic and reliable. "How, for instance," he asks, "does it apply to the following case? A pair of scissors is held by the points, by a 'medium,' over a sheet of writing paper. One of the persons present drops a pencil into the thumb-hole of the scissors. Presently, the *pencil stands apart from the steel*, begins to move, the hand of the medium is carried across the paper, and the signature of a person known to be dead appears! The father or other near relative of the person is present, and, from some peculiarity

in it, disputes the genuineness of the signature. The recent letters of the person are appealed to, and there the very same peculiarity is found, and the *exact correspondence of the two signatures demonstrated.* This case is reported in Horace Greeley's paper, the 'Tribune,' and, if I mistake not, he vouches for the honour and capacity of his correspondent, who gives the original letter of the father or relative of the alleged spirit-writer. I mention it from memory, but am certain the main facts of the record are as stated."

To this we add that, if true, it is most extraordinary, and nothing but a series of experiments upon an extended and unconnected scale can solve the riddle. That the signature should be a literal facsimile of the original hand is by no means so extraordinary as the pencil moving at all without contact, and moving, too, with such indications of intelligence presiding over such motions as cannot possibly be doubted.

The Zoist, a tolerably well-known, and, in some respects, a well-edited journal, strenuously advocating the doctrines of Mesmer, waits upon a medium, and gives us, with a certain significance of meaning, the preliminaries this wise:—The spirits are at times dilatory in making their presence known, which the medium accounts for in some such way as the prophet of old sarcastically hinted at the absence of Baal, but sooner or later they arrive, sometimes not till half-an-hour has elapsed, and then expectation is the more highly worked up, and *so much the less time is left for rigorous examination.* There is heard a faint rap at the table; so

faint perhaps that the medium says, 'Hush—stop: I heard a rap.' All listen; it is repeated; one hears it, and then another also hears it, and so on, till all agree that the rapping has begun, and the spirits have certainly arrived. All are now amazed, and all are attentive. The gentlemen become grave; the ladies pale; and all are satisfied that there is something in it. The sound is like the pecking of a bird; like a slight striking of the edge of a finger-nail upon a hard substance; and sometimes the sound is of a stronger hitting; all may be well imitated by striking the edge of a finger-nail upon a table with various degrees of force. The idea of anything peculiar, awful, unearthly in the sound, is ridiculous. There are slight raps from little children, strong ones from gentlemen spirits, and soft raps from lady spirits."

The result was a tissue of hazarded solutions to questions put, in which bad grammar and vile spelling were only surpassed by the ludicrous extent of the mistakes. A gentleman at the conclusion took a letter from his pocket, and the spirit present was asked if it would be so kind as to tell the name of the writer. It at once knocked assent, but made a most unlucky miss: neither surname nor Christian name was rapped right; and words were rapped out as different from the true as Jeremy Diddler is from Isaac Newton. And, why? *Because he held the alphabet under the table, so that the medium could not see it in his hand*, and he kept his eyes fixed on one spot." Now however ungallant such a proceeding might have been, it is quite evident that the "dominant impression" of the visitor is caught by the acute medium, who, with a certain force of cha-

racter, must read the questioner, and if he or she cannot anticipate the question, every care is taken to *direct* the question, and to have it put, varied, shifted, and repeated in such form that the general correctness of any replies is thus by no means difficult to be accounted for.

"Household Words" has not been much more favourable to the pretensions of the "spiritual manifestations" than those journals we have already quoted. The grave irony of this admirable periodical is deepened into a fierce and sarcastic bitterness in Blackwood, who, laughing at the whole theory, practice, professors, and visitors, as dupers and dupes, pours the whole phial of his ungovernable wrath on their devoted heads.

In "Chambers' Journal," we find that the examination has been conducted with considerable care; and an evident desire to be assured of the conscientious truth prevents the writer from coming to an actual decision,—whereby spirits and "mediums" receive the benefit of all doubts that may exist in their favour. To this we do not ourselves see the slightest objection. We would not deprive them of anything that they can hold by right, or even by suffrage. It will be sufficient to conquer them in detail, and to pile up the spoil, arms, trophies, and treasures, as they themselves cast them down.

An M.A., writing from Cambridge, describes, at some length, the results of an interview with Mrs. Haydon, and bears testimony to the fact that, in the majority of instances, the questions (of an intricate kind, too) which he propounded were satisfactorily answered; and while something like a suspicion

came over him, that while the replies were being given, the solution of the mystery was to be found in the circumstance of his pausing on such correct letters as a quick-sighted and practised medium might easily notice. This was negatived, however, by the fact that replies were also correct when the card was hidden. Even questions asked mentally, by himself and others present, and whose veracity he could trust in, terminated in the same satisfactory manner.

"At a third interview," continues our Cambridge M.A., "my time for questioning was very limited, but the following curious circumstance occurred :— I resolved to have some communication with which my own mind could have nothing to do in the way of influence. I received the following, which I give exactly as it was rapped out, that is, without any distinction of words or sentences [a necessary feature in all these communications, as the reader will at once perceive]. 'What say estth ouaproof b roth ergodwill give you?' The sense was not clear (indeed I thought it was all nonsense that I was getting)—until the end of the communication, when it appeared that the communication was: 'What sayest thou?—a proof, brother, God will give you.' The word 'brother' struck me as merely a common *formula ;* and, not having the most distant idea to whom I was indebted for this communication, I asked if the 'invisible' would favour me with his name. The answer was 'James.' Now as I did not, at the moment, recollect any friend of mine in the spirit-world of that Christian name, I immediately thought of an old college friend of mine, who, however, is still living So I next asked if it

was any relation? 'Yes.' What relation? 'Brother.' And it was not till this moment that it occurred to me that I had a brother of that name who died when I was only a few months old, of whom, therefore, as the reader may suppose, I am not much in the habit of thinking."

Strange as all this is, it is not so entirely inexplicable but that the spirits may be wholly dispensed with. In the scheme of Mesmerism, it is admitted that there is such a thing as *thought-reading*, besides the striking phenomena of clairvoyance; so that while the mesmerized patient can pierce walls and space, and give a catalogue of the furniture of a strange house, or describe correctly persons who, there may be reason to suppose, have not before been known to the patient, he (or she, for the female is more susceptible to the magnetic current than the male) can read the thought and reply to the unspoken question that is passing in the mind. In a subsequent chapter when examining the more elaborate theory of the Psychopneumatic system, this will be further enlarged upon. At present it is sufficient to indicate the probability.

The pulpit has not been slow, in eminent instances, to accept the spiritual explanation, but insists that the spirits are evil, and that the whole is of Satanic origin. Some time back, one of the New York Episcopal clergy (a Dr. Tyng), in a sermon warned his hearers against having aught to say or do with these spirits. Without denying or appearing to doubt the whole allegement of facts, he seems to have taken them for granted. Nor is that difficult if the power of the "prince of the air" is admitted to possess equal extent and energy as formerly.

Much to our surprise, too, the vigorous intellect of the Rev. Hugh M'Neile seems to tend in that direction. He also is inclined to attribute to these phenomena a Satanic origin, without giving himself much trouble in explaining how it is he arrives at such a phase of belief. With him agree the Rev. Francis Close of Cheltenham, and the Rev. Mr. Godfrey, who can at least claim the merit of experiment and observation, though we think, even by his own arguments, his deductions are not warranted by their premises.

A clergyman writing to the *Critic*, admits that he is puzzled and perplexed. He cannot attribute the manifestations to imposture. He is as reluctant to accept the hypothesis of spirits. Nothing short of a positive proof will convince him either one way or the other, and of the respectability of Mrs. Haydon he entertains not the remotest doubt. "If," he says, "the ghost of Sir Isaac Newton, or Euler, or La Grange, or some other first-rate mathematician, will come forward and integrate certain differential equations which have hitherto baffled all our best men, then will I believe in the ghost-theory most implicitly." But why do all conclude it is spirit work? And why, let us ask, why test spirits by any unsolved problems in mathematics? A spirit might solve *any* question (or series of questions) of this kind just as higher human intelligences like those of Des Cartes, Boyle, De Morgan, &c., surpass the common intelligences who find the Rule of Three a sphinx-riddle, and stop for ever on the threshold of the *pons asinorum*—a spirit might do this, but a mind of high mathematical constructiveness might do it also, and we should not think so very much of the spirit after all.

A medium of this class might arise like those arithmetical prodigies our Warder-books tell us of, and we hold therefore that the accomplishment of this being within human reach, is an insufficient test—certainly not a proof.

Adin Ballou, himself, expressly warns his readers not to place implicit confidence in all the communications that are made, or that they hear of. When one of their own leaders casts a doubt upon the fundamental principles of the theory, it is not to be wondered at that there should be such a diversity of opinions, even amongst themselves, nor that the spiritual agents of one medium should vilify and contradict those of his neighbour and rival.

From the "Paris Journal of Magnetism," a periodical of considerable pretensions, we feel tempted to take an extract, which still more reduces to the magnetic influence the bold claims of these manifestations to spiritual; and with such consistence as can be expected from a work ostensibly devoted to the propagation of the magnetic theory, clearly points out where the solution is, sooner or later, to be found by those who feel an interest in seeking it.

The letter appears under the signature of "Anna Blackwell,"—"I have myself been present on one occasion only with a lady, a friend of mine, a distinguished writer whom you well know yourself, at a private meeting at Mr. Stone's house: we waited upwards of two hours before the rapping could or would be heard, except in slight and distant taps. A second medium, a young girl belonging to London, in whom the faculty has recently declared itself spontaneously, and who was present, told us that we must be patient,

for they would soon have prepared 'the battery,' and that already a crowd of our friends were there, and ready to communicate with us as soon as the telegraph should be in a state to act. During this long suspense, the table frequently became as if charged with electricity, and we felt, instead of shocks, a series of continual vibrations, as well as in the floor, the chairs, &c. Another table, standing between ours and the windows, was likewise made to vibrate, and, distant taps becoming audible from it, we seated ourselves round it to try whether it might not succeed better than our own. Shortly after the taps ordered the young girl to go, with the rest of the operators, into another room, saying that her fluid thwarted that of Mrs. Haydon, the medium of Mr. Stone, and that they would talk with us as soon as we should be left alone with them. This was done, and strange noises, which we heard for the first time, filled the apartment, sounding all at the same time, so that it was not easy to distinguish one of them from another. But having contrived to learn the taps from some friends who declared themselves to be there—an easy matter, since each tap has its own note as distinguishable as the voice—I held with several of these strange communicators entire conversations, some of them absolutely intellectual, which fully convinced me that I was occupied with a being perfectly acquainted with my former career, and thoroughly sure of what he was saying. In reply to my mental questions, they quoted proper names, dates, &c., spelled by means of the alphabet with perfect accuracy. As my friend herself was ignorant of the greater part of the facts alluded to by

the taps, and as Mrs. Haydon, whom we both saw for the first time, knew no more than herself, it is evident that the medium, unless endowed with the faculty of clairvoyance to an almost miraculous degree—and it appears she did not possess it at all—could take no part in these answers.

"Frankly speaking, Mr. Editor, you yourself, who have long known me as a rational person, can you believe that on that evening I felt, or thought I felt, a hand upon my left heel? The pressure of the thumb on one side, and of the fingers on the other, was so well copied that I at first imagined that somebody had stolen beneath my chair, and yet there was no one there; and it would have been impossible for either of these two ladies to touch me in that manner without stooping, even had not their hands been at the time on the table.

"Since then another lady of my acquaintance, whilst she was trying to hold a table which would not be still, and on which she had laid her hand, had that hand severely pinched, and a ring which she wore was pulled with so much violence as to be broken in two—these pieces were drawn out in length another shape, so much altered that it was impossible to join them."

In the several statements that we have quoted and examined, they all for the most part expressly repudiate the idea that the "dollar" is at the bottom of the mystery. On this head we hold an opinion of our own, which it is scarcely necessary here to set forth; but we may observe that it is by no means an uncommon thing for those who find themselves, if not converted into the belief, willing at all events to

bear witness to the honesty of the propagandists, be they who or what they may; and it is no less true that where there is not a conviction, or even a shadow of it, the majority are as willing to attribute mercenary motives. To be candid we must confess ourselves to be in this category, and add that we really cannot avoid, after the immense mass of conflicting evidence we have waded through, coming to such a decision. This is not affected by the communications made by several persons of high respectability, namely, that spirit-manifestions form an evening recreation in great numbers of private American families where money is not at all concerned. But these do not state whether there was a medium or not in the room, since the medium is a "professional," and professional services must be paid for. The minor experiments of table-turning, &c., are not so much the matters at issue, since involuntary vital action in suspension is a thing that needs no ghost to superintend, and we may reasonably infer that the experiments do not go far beyond these with any degree of success or satisfaction.

Besides, in these private *séances*, however high the respectability of the parties may be, the love of practical joking cannot always be repressed, and no amount of "respectability" is expected to stem the current of a harmless bit of mischief when a little sly collusion or rapping on one's own account is determined on. There are few families where there is not a "pickle," little or big, and until we can trust to the literal and undoubted truth and intention of all concerned, so long shall we be inclined to suspect that some undercurrent of positive legerdemain,

—some Puck or "little Fadette" lies at the bottom. Something slily hidden to be easily found out.

If we are startled, as we admit ourselves to be, by the dark importance given by the Rev. Mr. Godfrey to table manifestations, what shall we say to the weak nonentity of Robert Owen's manifesto? Never was a cause more oppressed with senility. Never a struggling creed more encumbered with feeble aid. Never were sharpened arrows so wofully barbless. Never were great names and illustrious persons made to talk such mongrel nonsense as they do in the pamphlet which proclaims so magnificent a future to the world. Nothing can be more ambiguous, more jejune, or more contradictory. Robert Owen, however, is not alone in this dismal category, as we have already seen; and the promises made to him by the spirit of His Royal Highness the Duke of Kent have not had their fulfilment. Lord Brougham himself would seem to have some malicious intention of contradicting prophecy, and embarrassing the new creed of the Lanark sage.

The truth is, that the greater number of those who are real or sham professors and believers are of an originally credulous turn of mind. Visionary and enthusiastic, with leisure and light heads, they have but an ear to that which imposed upon them, till they practised the same on others. The impostors themselves may have in part deluded themselves into a sort of faith in their own pretensions. A few singular and unaccountable successes (unaccountable even to them) have confirmed them in assurances far more daring. The love of the marvellous, a diseased religious awe, and a susceptible tempera-

ment, have effected more than any medium or spirit could have done by any downright efficacy they can lay claim to.

In the method there is no dignity. In the manner, nothing that we reverence. To apply these knockings, rappings, and the like, to the great destiny which is in store for the soul, to tutor faith and teaching with electric sparks, and the sittings of a darkened room, to unite farce with tragedy, and the grotesque with the solemn and the dread, is to knead fire and ice, or to seek the reconciliation of two opposites that by no law of combination, by no reason, by no power on earth, can possibly be prosecuted with success.

In all the revelations and communications we have read or heard of, there is not one, we repeat, that makes us happier, wiser, better. Of what use is a spiritual system, then, which is so barren and unfruitful? We can only see the dawn of such a dismal time as periods of the middle ages ushered in, when insanity, madness, crime, despair, and death alternated upon and seized millions. A darkness without a moon of faith to light our path or of love to warm us; a region sterile and arid, with neither dews nor rain to moisten parched herbage; barren wastes and howling wildernesses alone seem to brood on above, and to open and stretch far away on all sides of us below. Death and the grave, with neither sting nor victory, but a blank and everlasting nothingness closing the whole dream of a feverish life for ever—such would seem to be the ultimatum of the new so called spiritual creed.

CHAPTER IX.

INVESTIGATION OF THE ORIGIN OF SPIRIT MANIFESTATIONS.

"There is a something in the human heart—a something,
——————— ever longing after mystery."—GOETHE.

It has always been a master passion with man, from time immemorial, to turn his thoughts with all the strength of awful hope and solemn yearning, from this border-land of the grave into the dim region of spirits which lies beyond it. The resistless instincts that now and again whisper to him of a life past and future—of an origin the soul, in oracles and visions, dimly retains, or thinks it has a fast-fading consciousness of, and of a life to come, which he can neither fathom nor fashion out, have prompted him to conceive every possible theory, to frame out every hypothesis and conjecture into a system, which he seeks to convert into the mould of his hopes and desires as far as he possibly can. The principle of aggregation exists in the moral as in the physical world. To obtain a suffrage of beliefs that are in unison with our own, to mould them, or to take a tone from them, to alter, modify, but still to create, are the means which all men of original

minds have taken in order to confirm their own beliefs and creeds. What the many believe one may soon be brought to believe also. He then who originates a belief and propagates it, can speedily spy out the defects of his system, and repair them. He can see its wants, and supply them with requisite addenda, like Mahomet or Joe Smith. He can discard and select, adapt and dovetail, as he thinks requisite, or as he finds the harmony of proportion demands, till, finally, like a structure that has grown out of twenty suggestions, it is complete. It may be many-sided. It may comprehend excrescences with well-matched beauties. It may be here crude, there perfect—yonder progressing or nascent, but still it is a structure, one and indivisible, after a fashion. It is a unity, rugged, disproportionate, if you will; yet there stands that which stood not there erst-while; there is the temple: erect the altar, and bring the worshippers. And so for twenty nations there may exist twenty such abstractions, differing in form, varying in nature and aspect, but all springing from the same unity of purpose,—the thirst for immortality, the yearning to depict that which is eagerly desired, and which cannot be seen.

This yearning after the unseen, the immortal, the eternal, with all its train of grandeur, its august scintillations of thought, its grovelling superstitions, its grotesque horrors, its diversified range between sublimity and meanness, characterizes, in some degree, and more or less, all Pagan Mythos, all sectarian manias, and all delusions of a religious kind, that have ever had birth. As old as death or the primeval curse is the thought of a life after death. "To die

and go we know not where," was insupportable to all people of the earth, even anterior to the time of Christ. It needed no revelation, no coming back from the dead, to tell one this. The very voices within the human temple and system of the universe itself told of decay and reproduction—told how speedily was the river of death rolling through time, while the dwellers in eternity collected in crowds on the far shadowy side; and the whispering of the night bore babblings which, while vague and mysterious, it was not difficult, in the crucible of the eagerly-expectant mind, to convert and translate into a language too powerless to express the ineffable vision which the imagination erected with lightning speed.

Old mythology has not removed the spirit-world very far from that of the real, even in what may be spoken of in the abstract as a measurable distance. Like the necropolis, where the dead slumber, and the weary are at rest, it is but as without the city walls, and in many a Mirza-vision the rapt and dreamy spiritualist of old would go forth in the cool of the evening, and, under the watching stars, by wild incantation cast the sombre pall aside, and gaze with an awful gladness into the mysteries of a life for which he was preparing himself by fast and vigils, by unbridled imagination, and by potent spell. Would not the "spirit" theory in ages of mysticism and symbol, when the sciences were accidents, and the half of the common, of a supernatural cast, strike the vulgar; would not its inventor impress the seal of his spirit on the age, and make his doctrine work anything he pleased in the way of conversion and of persuasion?

Could he not lead the multitude as he pleased? What are the names of Zoroaster, of Pythagoras, of Plato, Zeno, Epicurus, and the rest, but indications of such teachings? Their immortality is the symbol of creeds that ruled thousands in their age, and ere, and long after. Could but the priestly lore of Egypt be deciphered now, we should see in the names of their theosophists those who formed her first creeds, and blended on one stock the stupendous in grace and grandeur, with the lowest and most debased forms of belief in the invisible, through symbol and through sign.

Crude at first, these ideas became polished, perfect agencies; a genealogy of gods once established, the qualities of life, motion, and matter, rendered impersonation necessary,—hence, gods, demigods, messengers, attributes, life in the air, earth, sea, and fire, life in the stem and the leaf, the grass, and descending dews. Poetry awoke and consecrated all with a tenderness, grace, and beauty that recommended the system in various modes to all the human race.

Creating thus a future home, an Elysian garden, "a dwelling not made with hands," where the souls of heroes and good men were to dwell, and which the wicked, after long expiation, might attain, it was necessary that messengers, interpreters, and ministering angels, should stand between man and Hades, and so expound to his tumultuous and thirsty mind what and who, and in what manner spirits, dwell there. So arose the priest, the hierophant, the possessed, the magician, the wizard, sorcerer, and the long train of good and bad agencies, that have since filled the world with wonder and with awe.

It was not till after the advent of the Saviour that religion, grafted on paganism, took, with depraved and vulgar minds, those awful and harrowing depths of woe and despair which characterized the ages after the church was established. Tartarus and its fiery lakes surrendered to the penal Hell, to the "second death" of Irenæus, and to the expiatory pains of purgatory. Then, indeed, did the shadows of darkness fall on the moral world. The beautiful and benign system of atonement, as taught by the Scriptures, was hidden and encumbered by dread and terror. The gospel of love, preached but to a few, and not comprehended even by those, gave place to a gospel of terror, and to the dread anathemas of a church that sacrificed its divine kingdom to splendours and to dominancy over this. The haunted precincts of existence poured and vomited forth spectres and horrors, wraiths, demons, ghouls, and vampires. To play with the passions of the people was not difficult. Blue fires, subterranean, as also superterranean noises, ghastly midnight visitants, were easily worked. The little science that was known was enlisted by the crafty in this reign of terror, where they were potential, and panic became a moral chronic among men. For every thing that was grisly and appalling, the Witch of Endor served as a text. Sorcery had been forbidden by a king whose life was one long struggle with insane passions. Violent and haughty, he had disobeyed the commands of the Most High, and the hour of retribution was at hand. His Nemesis was stalking noiselessly behind him, out of sight, but she was already grasping at the royal fillet. To his palace-gates rose the murmur of advancing foes;

around him were cries of mutiny; and the horizon of his hopes grew dark, and dread, and hopeless, so that his bold soul shrank with a deadly and ominous fear. No longer came the warning dream, the voice of Urim in reply to prayer. The warnings of the prophets had been neglected, and, shrouded in gloom and despair, he sought the dwelling of the creature whose lips he had sealed with a sign, whose arts he had suspended by a word. In disguise he commands her to foretell to him his future. He is reminded of the king's edict, but in the tone of a king (which she could not mistake) he bids her fear nothing, and assures her of protection. The form and bearing of him who stood colossal in the tents of Israel might, if nothing else, have taught her who the visitant was. The hag begins; affects to behold spirits ascending, and is ordered to call up the spirit of Samuel. After cries of terror, she describes him as an old man enveloped in a mantle, which to Saul's excited imagination, became identical with Samuel. It was easy to predict the fate of one so beset and so crushed by misfortunes. Common rumour might tell the witch the few chances in his favour, the certain reverses gathering against him. In his great anguish and despair the monarch-soldier laments that God has forsaken him, and she confirms this despair by her sentence. Like a lion at bay she turns him in the battle. He beholds his army beaten, his sons slain, and, disdaining to be taken captive, falls on his own sword, and dies, as long after it was the "high Roman fashion" to die.

Sorcery, witchcraft, magic, divination, and the rest, became, on such authority as this, the great

manias of the middle ages. What was grand in Greek and other antique mythology became hideous here. Nemesis pursuing crime; the Eumenides lashing with remorse and terror the wicked and the doomed, the fatal sisters presiding over birth, and destiny, and death, have something grand about them, something suggestive in their separate spheres of action; but in the witch sabbaths, and demon revels, ghostly hauntings, and other churchyard horrors of succeeding ages, nothing but the lowest elements of the horrible are perceptible.

In reading of these delusions of the past, by which the structure of society was shaken to its basis, civilization retarded and otherwise fatally injured, and the whole business of life paralyzed, we cannot help being struck with the occasional developments of insanity that occurred on such scales of magnitude, and so repeatedly. Free as we are from any such tendencies at the present day—though spirit manifestations did indeed threaten a revolution of the popular mind,—it seems one of the marvels of the impossible, that thousands of persons—no rank, no condition, no age or sex, excepted—should seize a belief, a mania like the plague, and act and argue, as if they were in the literal bonds of the Evil One. The stories told would be all very well as the ingenious exercises of a fantastic mind, but these traditions of *diablerie* handed down, are incontrovertible truths, and cannot but impress us with a pity for the imbecility of human intellect at different stages, whatever we may say of its powers in other respects.

Periodical insanity on a gigantic scale there un-

doubtedly was, and wisdom and eld left aside duty and labour to follow the hysterical troop that, dancing, and sometimes naked, went like frantic Corybantes through the streets of European capitals. In hysterical catalepsy, they were borne off to wizard heights,

> "With birch and with broom,
> Over stick, over stone;"

where Pandemonium had sent a deputation to meet them, and where they held their dreadful orgies. This was the active development of those delusions. Melancholy madness, dementia, asceticism, fanaticism, the scourge, fasting, exacerbation, and the rest, completed it, and exhibited its passive phase. We have nothing, that *we* know of, in the shape of treatise or discourse written at those periods, that serves to cast a judicial or clinical light on the matter. A verbose record of the events is all, and these are many, for the manias are many. Their name was legion. In one instance thousands of children went wandering through the country, and died in groups. In another, crowds of men went lashing and scourging themselves through the public streets. These anarchies were composed of indecency, obscenity, blasphemy, and disease, such as we have no other parallels on record for; unless, indeed, the Scriptures may supply us with circumstances approximating—the worshipping of Moloch, leprosy, demoniacal possession, and so forth.

One reason why such a mania, when it occurred, grew apace so rapidly, and infected such numbers, was, doubtless, the ignorance that existed as regarded mental pathology, and the consequent lack of

asylums and madhouses, where the mischief might have been checked ere it grew to a head. There was no want of room. Convent and cloister, monastery and cathedral appendages, would have sufficed for the temporary hospital. There was no want of men and women good and zealous, as human nature has ever shown in times of great requirement, but there was a total lack of the physician to watch the diagnostics of the disease. There was a lack, perhaps, in the therapeutics of the day, though few drugs or mandragora would have been required. The frenzy had its way. Time and intelligence alone could cure it. The lazar-houses held their share, the barren wastes theirs. The tomb covers all now, and only the memory—a sad and mournful one enough—remains to mark the events that passed by like a convulsion, and carried its victims off with it.

The apparition and the phantom were other crude deposits of these monstrous things. We have something like a knowledge that only a thin tenebrous veil lies between us and that solemn land, where each spectre takes its solitary way to grief or glory. But this veil, like that of Isis, has never been lifted up. At times—for we cannot deny nor assert the possibility—at times, we repeat, dusky visages, shadows of shapes, glaring forms, may come to the other side of the veil, and so far make themselves palpable to us—so far even as to touch with a breath—to startle with a sigh, to condense that essence to the sense of touch, or to what is to the imagination its equivalent; and thus to give us all the impress and all the awe of a communion near or distant with the spirits of those who dwell beyond "the portal," where we

should have thought no cares, instincts, and ties of this life would have entered, but have been left behind, like the Christian's burden, at the foot of the Cross.

Palingenesey, or the reproduction of the original to infinity, from its ashes, if not the real groundwork of the theory of apparitions, at least gave it consecutiveness, force, and the direct influence of collateral evidence. One portion of these theories, too, was to insist upon a kind of material soul, which, by some inherent attraction, still lingered in the mundane sphere, and, by the force of an attraction which is a part of the mysterious whole, was still drawn towards those it loved and dwelt with upon earth; and, if nothing more, gave signs of its existence, its anxiety and interest in their welfare.

Lavater, at a later time, and with him Mesmer, so we take it, gave to the strength of the imagination a controlling magnetic force, by which it was capable, at any distance, of impressing and influencing the like emotions in other individuals. This idea has been expanded by the founder of the Odylic theory, until it has become one of the logical weapons in the hands of the magnetist, and manifestor, or medium. On the other hand, science has treated apparitions with a lofty sort of scorn, and, by creating for itself an hypothesis, has talked learnedly of latent impression, of optical delusion, of the retina of reflection, refraction—what not? In this respect, however, science has done good service. It has prevented us from rushing into delusion headlong. Has it done a corresponding evil, that of making men rush into the extreme of doubt and scepticism? We doubt.

Lenses, concave mirrors, the forming of phantoms in the air by some *simulacra* cast from a reflecting body, might do much to move wonder and excite the mind. The repetition of these weakened the results, for they required a kind of animation, and the figures of colossal gods ever so grand and august, if they move not, speak not, thunder not, become, like the productions of the chisel, mighty and supernal sculptures, awakening admiration at their beauty and proportion. The supernatural dies away.

But fiery lights, coruscations, and figures in motion, revive what was decaying. The conjuror must learn more to be perfect. Yet more revelations of the spirit-land must be granted, ere man will totally be subjected. The fable of the Dioscari is one that we cannot but admire for its several striking graces, but if we attempt to account for their appearance in the Capitol, or at the great battle, striking and strident, by the theory of optical delusion, practised by some sage *flamen*, all that we have gained in the impress of the sublime and the awful perishes under the arid mathematics of light and shadow, and we are once more of the earth—earthy. On the contrary, if the spiritual vision cannot be argued away, what an increase is there to the faith that only wanted the slightest confirmation to carry its belief to any extent!

To reduce this to theory—to bring it within the bounds of probability—let us imagine the following:

A son mourning for a beloved parent,—or a husband sorrowing in sobbing anguish for the wife of his bosom,—or a father, in love and awe, in the unspeaking pains of separation from that bud of promise,

that apple of the eye which is now growing in the garden of God—shall in lonely meditation dwell upon that face and form, which, now no more, were dearer to him than all the world beside.

Surrounded by the silence of his room, while the cool twilight of a summer bathes his brow, he gazes abstractedly through the opened window at the coming stars flooding the azure floor of heaven; pressed by thick coming fancies, he surrenders himself to those memories so dear—hears one by one the tones wake, the sweet voice flow, the oral music loosed—sees (in fancy) hair wave, eyes flash, and smiles dimpling the cheek. The parent is lost in dream-land, seeking for his child beloved, and with a consciousness that it is near him, but that he is also nearer to earth, he casts himself with all the force of a will becoming entranced, into the search his soul is now, with every effort, making. And dear remembrances, tiny embraces, fond caresses, such as pass between child and parent, come with a redoubled reality to him. The scene changes: light is broader. The sun shines on that fair forehead: the child is at play; it laughs, it touches his knees!

What, all at once, makes the man start, turn pale, gaze with all his soul into space, and experience an awe, half terror, half love, as the nerves thrill and the hair creeps? Tears are in his eyes, palpitation is at his heart, and the *globus hystericus* well nigh chokes him. He has *seen his dead darling!* He has heard that soft, soft voice again. The tiny hand has touched him!

Such may be the *rationale* of a spirit-visit, which, taking other coincidences of time into consideration,

no argument, or any usual means of conviction adopted, will ever persuade to the contrary. The paradox is, too, that the same individual may reject the ghost-theory in the main, and this proves not only the whole difficulty of ever adjusting the matter while in uncertainty he wavers between two opinions. It is only necessary that the medium, with his "manifestations," should step in, and make of him a conquest to his faith for ever.

During partial darkness, the eye assumes certain impressionable conditions. In order to pierce the gloom, and to collect whatever amount of feeble light there is, the pupil undergoes an expansion to the whole width of the iris, and it is shown that in this state the pupil fails to accommodate itself to the clear perception of any object at hand; consequently, shapes and forms at a distance become vague and confused; at that distance, we calculate, we can best behold them. In this state, the eye is favourable to the production of any kind of optical delusion, and in this state, too, the imagination is most easily excited. Now, these spectral forms assume a white or greyish hue, as no actual colour can be decidedly pronounced upon, and those objects which most reflect the little amount of corpuscular rays in the chamber, or which may be projected from a luminous ground, or by anything animate that may actually, or by reflection, pass across the surface of this ground, also assume that spectral aspect which it is the province of the illusion to produce. The eye, strained to the utmost, discerning an inanimate object whose different projections reflect light in different degrees, is enabled to obtain a more sus-

tained and collected view; but a constant evanescence, and a constant recurrence, also take place, and the necessary change of outline following hard on this, will give it the semblance of a living or moving form. Meanwhile, it depends upon the coolness and courage of the spectator to advance and dispel the illusion; or, seized with a nameless fear, to transform it into an apparition, and invest it with the features or the well-known form of some one, living or dead, who dwells most dominant in the spectator's mind. This eluding and again consubstantiating form or shape, traced in such a twilight, would take such a gliding motion as is usually attributed to ghosts; and though there may be no actual movement from the spot, there is so much that is like it, as to render the delusive phantasy perfect.

Thus, then, those inclined to superstition, or who are under the influence of dread, receive such confirmation of their fears, as to create grounds for an authenticated ghost-story; and add to this the known integrity of the narrator, when he gives his assurance that such a visitation or manifestation has been made him, that he must be sceptical indeed who will not go far to give implicit credence to the wildest and most wondrous tale.

The apparitions of Nicolai, the German bookseller, are too familiar to need more than a reference to, being illustrations of the case in point, and evidently the result of optical delusion, arising from the disordered state of the nervous system, and a consequent derangement in the faculty of sight. Other very singular examples, too, may be found in Sir David Brewster's work on "Natural Magic."

Those who would argue the probabilities of a writing-medium from some such event as the handwriting on Belshazzar's palace walls, and point out to the unknown nature of the characters as a coincidence carrying proof, do not hesitate to prove "possession," and from the authority given in the narrative respecting the demons of the Gadarene swine. This, as we shall attempt to show in another chapter, is one of the most frightful tendencies of spirit manifestations. But such persons argue on grounds that assume more than we grant to them, for the plain reason that all relative conditions between man and his Maker are so far changed as to render such manifestations unnecessary and unmeaning. The writing on the wall, and the possessed by Legion, the demons and the swine, were all necessary, and had a meaning, neither of which it is our place or inclination to explain or reason upon. It is for the most part the illogical premises on which it is argued that modern manifestations are only continuations of things that have happened before and may happen again, that we find fault with. We do not object, we rather incline to believe, that whatever in these alleged manifestations be true, is referable to the pneumatic or magnetic theory, which, hitherto just as little comprehended, will eventually turn out to be an unexplored phenomenon in the department of magnetic electricity, and that it is possible even now we may be on the verge of discovery, or that another half century may pass by without any direct or satisfactory conclusion being come to.

The spirits are said to control and compel the muscular system of the medium, or those with whom

it may be in Odylic *support*. Be it so. We concede at once that in anything where an unexplainable or occult power is exhibited, whatever a man may do, that may a spirit do also. Let us look at the following:—"I requested a young lady," says Dr. Elliotson, "whom I had long mesmerized, with the never-tiring devotion of a parent, and in whom I produced a variety of phenomena, to promise to be unable on waking to see her maid, who always sat in the room at work during my visit, till I left the room, and then at once to discern her. On waking, she said she did not see the maid, but said she saw the chair on which the maid sat. Presently, however, she saw the maid, was agitated, had an hysteric fit, and passed into the sleep-waking state. I now inquired how she came to see her maid, as I had not left the room, and told her she must not [see the maid], when I awoke her again. I then awoke her again; she could not see the maid, was astonished at the maid's absence, and at first supposed she was in an adjoining room; but presently rang the bell twice, though the woman was standing before her. I moved just out of the room, leaving the door open, and she saw the maid instantly, and was astonished, and laughed." "In the Colophonian oracle," says a writer in the *University Magazine*, "they were the spectators, not the prophetess, who had need thus to be put under the influence of the mesmeric *glamour*. Can it be that, in certain diseased states of the optic nerve, it really is subject to the illusion of seeing objects rise in air, as well as go round in horizontal motion? They who saw these sights in the *adyta* of temples, in caves and sacred groves, in initiations and oracular consulta-

tions, were all prepared by fasting, watching, and prayer, for the reception of biological influence, and possibly may have seemed to themselves to see what others desired they should believe themselves to have actually seen. Was Lord Shrewsbury under this influence at Caldaro?"

The mesmerist can do strange things, truly enough, as we ourselves have seen on more than one occasion, but on one especially. Whatever may signify, by the most expressive pantomine, the will of the manipulator, there it exists in the aspect and action of the passive victim to his skill; and it is into these biological experiments that inquiry and attention ought to be turned, since they promise a far more abundant harvest, than those more recondite but unsatisfactory "manifestations" which have led to much vexation of spirit, and of late occasioned so much excitement.

At the will of the mesmerist water is wine, spirits, or beer; it is gall and hyssop, it is honey-dew, it is poison, it is an anodyne. His will projects a storm, and the mesmerized hear the roar of the wind, shiver under its cold and biting blast, and rock to and fro with the reeling ship; they shrink from a tropic sun; they shudder in the presence of serpents, and hear the noisome reptiles hiss and crawl. And as these are, after all, but images, appearances—*eidolons* or *simulacra*—like the philosophers of the "Alciphron" they will proceed to dissect the material and annihilate the reality we stand and move upon.

But after all a complete negation proves nothing. A complete acceptance proves as little. The theory of imaginative phantoms just speculated upon would not suffice to account for the *appearance* of a phantom

to two, three, or more persons in broad noon-day, as has been attested to, we should say, beyond the possibility of all doubt. Arriving thus far, we find ourselves as completely at fault as ever. Contrary to usage, Mr. Spicer insists that the exception shall prove a rule; that out of twenty folded letters placed upon a table, though the rapping spirit should be in error regarding the first nineteen, if he prove the twentieth it will be sufficient for him that there is neither imposture nor collusion in the matter. We cannot well deny an inference so fair, ourselves, and out of the myriad names in one city, it must be a hazardous chance, as wonderful as the spirits themselves, that can hit upon the correct one.

What, then, are these dark and occult powers? It is easy enough to substitute one reason for another hypothesis, but it is a different thing to make that substitution good. It is not to be doubted but that animal magnetism (and, as a matter of course, most of its modern adjuncts) has been familiar to the world under other names, and in the forms of divine ecstasy, demonology, witch-mania, and the rest.

This mesmeric phenomenon renders the patient insensible to pain. It is in fact antalgic; but, in return, it asserts mastery over the human individual will. The clairvoyant has a capacity for speaking languages the person has never known—for observing organic diseases in others—for seeing beyond the limits of vision—for the faculty of sharing in some way the thoughts of others, or of anticipating them—for resisting the action of fire, for a period at least—for being in effect the agent that acts between the immaterial and the material worlds. The clair-

voyant cannot explain the theory, or give a lucid reason for such. The operator is as little able, except by conjecture, comparison, and the like.

This condition may be produced spontaneously. By fixing the eye upon an object, by concentrating the thought upon an idea, by isolating one's self in the completest manner from all surrounding and extraneous things, the state of semi-trance may be induced. It is thus that a concentration of the magnetic fluid is gathered or absorbed, and the results are in like proportion. A writer plausibly asserts that this must have been the foundation of the epidemic manias, and that the contagion multiplied in its intensity of communication, as the numbers increased, and the magnetic electricity became centred among them.

We cannot but agree with those who refer to electricity as the generator and true motive-power of the whole phenomena, witnessed and detailed; though the manifestations that are produced are in so many ways dissimilar to all known developments of that fluid. "This interior concussion of particles," says an intelligent examiner of the system, "which occurs in the ordinary sounds (rapping, &c.,) can be attributed to no other cause than the permeation and action of some subtle essence analogous to electricity. It is, accordingly, another important fact, that persons of delicate nerves can generally feel abundant evidence of the action of such an essence, while the phenomena in question are occurring. If, for instance, the points of the fingers are placed near where the sounds are produced, a slight tingle will be felt in the fingers, hands, and

arms of the susceptible, precisely resembling a (mild) shock from a galvanic battery."

That the system is capable of gathering within it, and of giving out by contact, or by distant affinity, currents of the electric fluid, is now a matter, we think, beyond question. This is termed vital electricity, and of a kind that is not evolved in the common and usual developments of that agent. It is controllable by the mind of another as often as it may be; and certainly more so under the control of the person himself, especially if, in addition to a susceptible organization, the strength of will is more than usually marked. In this case, however, a "reflex current is also continuously running back to the brain, to convey to it the consciousness of the act with the hand. In the case of the so-called spirit-meetings, although the act may have originated in the individual's own brain, and a current passed to the hand, dictating the performance of certain acts or motions, yet no current returns to convey an idea of the performance of such acts by the hand. The current may be supposed to pass off from the person;" and, reasoning from this, it may be assumed that this "detached vital electricity" may operate much in like manner on the system of another.

It is, therefore, this vital electricity, this odylic fluid of Reichenbach's, that must now occupy the attention of the learned, of the earnest, of the seeker after truth, unless we are content to stop short at the advent of a strange and unaccountable agent, and leave it to take its course; the foolish to be deluded, the credulous to believe anything, and the indifferent to see a perilous matter growing to a head.

Reichenbach pretty fairly indicates in what phenomena common to the scientific such odylic power is found. It is vividly manifest in a number of instances where pure magnetism gives no evidence of its presence. It is met with in many chemical processes, inevitably in crystallization, in friction, in the spectra of sun, moon, and candle-light, in combustion perhaps generally, for caloric must be intimate in connexion with it, in polarized light, and in the amorphous world generally. Here, then, we have the elements for a new course of study in nature and the laboratory.

We should propose that a body of gentlemen, of undeniable position, respectability, and talent, and whose names should be a guarantee of good faith and honour, should establish themselves into a club, should experimentalize, and report progress. Their experiments may proceed individually, and the collective evidences be produced, compared, and tested. They could be carried on in a general body, as well. By diligent observation and inquiry something more that we yet lack must ultimately be found out; that something may lead us to the final principle which now eludes us. That principle must be an immaterial intelligence, spirit or no spirit, a denizen of this world, or of the spheres. We should not fear trial. The odylic, or electro-magnetic fluid, pervades all nature. It is of an imponderable, and, if you please, of a spiritual kind: and it is by means of this fluid that the soul of man can act upon his grosser material parts. Along the electric wires—the nerves of the body—flies the winged message from the brain. The tongue moves—the hand up-

lifts—the foot advances, and the rest of vital action follows. Who shall say that this element, under peculiar circumstances, is not productive of independent sound and motion? What prompts the somnambulist when no conscious will rules him? To the solution of this many years to come must be dedicated. But we must proceed to lay before our readers a more scientific attempt at explanation than has yet been seen.

CHAPTER X.

THE SCIENTIFIC SOLUTION.

"And I have a remedy, brother;
Hearken, 'tis worth thy hearing."—MONCKTON.

It is well that we can direct attention to arguments far more stable and tangible than any we have as yet had to deal with. In a work of American origin, entitled "The Philosophy of Mysterious Agents, Human and Mundane," by E. C. Rogers, we have a most respectable, painstaking, and, we may add, reliable authority. It is a work of deep research, of profound argument, of elaborate examination, comparison, and rational deduction.

Mr. Rogers credits the existence of a newly-discovered *physical* agent, "distinct from electricity, but closely allied with animal magnetism," and which is identical with the od or odylic force of Baron Reichenbach. This force can be traced in two distinct forms of operation; one is totally independent of a presiding intelligence—the other exhibits the phenomena of intelligence ruling and guiding it. It thus becomes provision—intelligent

clairvoyance—acts at a distance *through* matter and space, and thus produces all the phenomena that have been attributed to direct spiritual agency.

We are led on by a series of the nicest deductions through a whole mass of attested physical phenomena, in which electricity can be clearly discovered as primary causation, until we arrive at that point where the line divides the invisible and the impalpable from the material and the actual—that transition boundary, where spirit and body blend, where the one becomes in a manner the other, and the positive characteristics of both are undistinguishable and undefinable by any technology yet invented. If we remember that the mysteries of alchemy have been transferred to the precise laws of chemistry, and that the fearful wonders of astrology have assumed the sublime principles of astronomy, we shall not be much mistaken if, sooner or later, the mysteries of electro-biology and odylic phenomena be not reducible to as exact proportion, and become subject to laws as well defined, as any that are recognizable in the arena of the material world at the present hour. Science and discovery have done so much to render the (alleged) impossible possible, that we neither doubt nor despair. Let us notice, then, the tendency of Mr. Rogers' doctrines.

The somnambulic trances, and odyle-magnetic condition of Angélique Cottin, and of Frederica Hauffe, in addition to others of less magnitude but equal importance, are taken as the text of certain corollaries to be deduced therefrom, which amount to the following. The fact itself is very evident, that physical agents—subtle, unseen—are everywhere at work. "Force shows itself," as the elegant Somerville

remarks, "in everything that exists in the heavens or on the earth. It pervades every atom; rules the motions of animate and inanimate beings; and is as sensible in the descent of a rain-drop as in the falls of Niagara; in the weight of the air as in the periods of the moon." There is a physical power which "not only binds satellites to their planet, and planets with suns, and sun with sun, throughout the wide extent of creation, which is the cause of the disturbances as well as of the order of nature," but it physically binds man to man, and man to nature. And, as "every tremor it excites in one planet is immediately transmitted to the furthest limits of the system, in oscillations, which correspond in their periods with the cause producing them, like sympathetic notes in music, or vibrations from the deep tones of an organ," so every vibration thus excited is transmissible to the delicate centres of every organic being, provided the repulsive agent of those beings is changed in its relative condition, so as to admit the influx.

In the years 1849-50, certain highly respectable houses in the city of New York seem to have been all at once unaccountably beset with a strange power, which seized upon particular parts, and would not allow any one, not even the members of the families, to touch those seemingly consecrated things. Whenever this was attempted, a loud, sharp sound would be instantly given, accompanied with a sharp and spiteful flash of light, as if the agent was determined to protect that which it had seized upon. But this was not all; it would smartly shock the intruder with a blow, as if with an unseen fist, or the like. It even seized upon the members of these families at times, and would, so to speak, make them apparently

strike one another, in an unseen manner, simultaneously. It was often the case that a stranger could not call at the door without being instantly struck on the wrist or elbow, on touching the knob of the door-bell; and he would see, at the same instant, an angry flash of light, as if from some demon's eye. The ladies were not allowed to kiss each other without each receiving, on the approach of their lips, a fiery smack, as if from a spirit's lips. The dear little ones of these families were prevented from giving their mothers the parting salutation on retiring for the night, on account of this electric tormentor.

That the characteristics of this "force" differ from those of electricity, as commonly educed, appears from the circumstances attending the touching of Angélique Cottin, when a person would receive what really seemed a true electric shock, yet Arago could not detect the characteristics of electric agency. He noticed that the north pole of the magnet gave Angélique Cottin a powerful shock, and the south pole produced no effect upon her; but he could not detect the least influence from her organism upon the magnetic needle; and yet a powerful force from her body would overturn tables, and raise a heavy weight without contact. Not only so, but at times these outward things would attract her towards them—"Thus," argues a sound professor of science, "demonstrating the action and *re*action of the same agent, and that, whatever the force was, it *acted from the tables* and *other objects upon her*,—that therefore it resided with *them* as well as with her,—that, consequently, it was a common inorganic, physical agent, susceptible, under favourable circumstances, of a most powerful

action from the laboratory of the animal organs. Moreover, the facts throughout show that the condition required for this unusual evolution of force is a specific variation of the organism from its normal condition. It is evident, therefore, that this agent is *not the vital organic agent, nor a part of it*, though the former is associated with the latter in the organism. We are not to conclude, however, that this is the only inorganic agent which is associated with the vital force. It is well known that electricity has its place among the other forces in the animal economy,—so has heat,—but they are "principles found universally in nature."

"Vitality," says Dr. Wm. F. Channing, "is dependent on physical conditions, and performs its functions by the agency of physical forces. A distinction thus exists between the principle itself and the agents by which its results in the living structure are accomplished. This distinction is an essential one, and constitutes the basis of any system which proposes to act directly on the vital forces. The *agents employed by the animal organization are principles found* UNIVERSALLY IN NATURE; and, in addition to these, a force which is peculiar to living structures, the special agent of vitality." Now, it might reasonably be expected, that if electricity, among other agents found "universally in nature," is also associated with the agent of the animal economy, it might, under favourable conditions, exhibit its characteristic phenomena.

It is well known to every chemist, that wherever there is chemical action there is an evolution of electricity. Now the vital force is constantly keeping up

a chemical action in the animal organism; it must therefore follow that there is a constant evolution of electric agency in that organism. The experiments of Matteucci upon the muscles of animals show that they act as elements of a voltaic pile. Thus, when we connect the interior and the surface of the muscle of a living or recently-killed animal by means of a conducting arc, the existence of an electric current is then vigorously demonstrated. The current is always directed from the interior to the exterior of the same muscles. It exists without the direct influence of the nervous system, and is not modified even when we destroy the integrity of the latter. It is not, however, from the nutrition of the muscular system alone that the evolution of electricity takes place; nor is it to chemical action alone that it can be attributed. It is well known to philosophers that every change of matter, however slight, occasions an electric development. There is not a muscular movement, voluntary or involuntary, that does not break up portions of the organism into particles; neither is there a motion of the brain, indeed, by thought, passion, or emotion, that does not produce the same effect. This change of matter in the organism—this constant disintegration—must therefore constantly evolve the electric agency. Respiration, circulation, digestion, secretion, and so forth, are constantly giving freedom to this force. These opinions, the many experiments of Thilorier, Lafontaine, and others, confirmed, in a lengthy paper laid before the Academy of Paris. These are essentially affirmative of Reichenbach's odic force, the more enlarged features of which are its independence

of the usual conductors, or rather its capacity for transforming negative into positive conductors, and the like. Reichenbach found this force as it emanated from the organism transmissible "not only through metals, but also glass, resin, silk, &c., as if they were perfect conductors." The analogy here is beyond all question on this ground. MM. Thilorier and Lafontaine with their new agent, Matteucci with his anomalous agent, and Reichenbach with his odyle, met in common. When the free odic force is thus accumulated in a body, it is retained in it in such a manner that it does not readily escape, as is the case with electricity. This is what takes place in the case of some mediums, who become powerfully charged with the odic force; and it is under the circumstance of a sudden change of the nerve-centres of the organism that this force escapes, as was witnessed in the case of Angélique Cottin. At one moment there were in her case severe nervous paroxysms, a tremor of the muscles, and at one instant everything would be overthrown which she touched, or even approached without touching. Now, the difference between the case of Angélique Cottin and that of the so-called "mediums" of the present day, with regard to the discharge of the odic force, is this:—With the former, the cause of the discharge lay wholly in the sympathetic and spinal nerve-centres. The unusual accumulation of this force, in the first place, was caused by a peculiar abnormal action of the lower sympathetic nerves, mostly connected with the uterine functions. This accumulation of force arrived at its maximum between the hours of seven and nine in the evening. Its in-

fringement upon the spinal system at the time of its discharge caused the spasms. The muscles also became charged with it from the sympathetic centres, causing their tremor; and, what is worthy of observation, the parts where the discharge of this force was very intense would have a peculiar trembling, "which," says Arago, "communicated itself to the hand which touched the parts." We say that the difference between this case and the "mediums" of the present day, in whose presence tables are made to move, sometimes without touching, is that the force in the case of Angélique discharged itself by causes acting below the psychological centres; whereas the discharge of the force from the organism of the "mediums" is more at the command of the brain centres.

As an illustration of the magnetic force which controls the will, and holds the faculties captive, we cannot but think the following letter from a friend, given by Mr. Rogers, as being of deep importance:—

"Agreeably to your request I herewith transmit the facts respecting the influence of the *magnet* in producing the magnetic sleep in the case of my little son. His age is fifteen. For some days he was put to sleep each day for about a quarter of an hour. About ten days since he was playing with a small horse-shoe magnet, capable of sustaining about twelve or fourteen ounces. In a short time I perceived that he was asleep, and exhibited the usual symptoms of the magnetic state. I attempted to assure him, and he immediately opened his eyes, but said, 'I am in the magnetic state; I can see everything just as when I am magnetized.' I attempted,

by the usual passes, to remove it, but found I could not. He said, 'It is the magnet that has produced this state, and you cannot take it off.' I then took the magnet in my hand, and tried the effect of making several passes with that, but it only increased the difficulty. I then proposed to send the magnet away to a distant place, but he objected with great earnestness, and even with tears. I then persuaded him to go with me into another room twenty or thirty feet distant from the magnet, and after staying there a short time he consented to have the magnet removed. I again tried, by the usual passes, to remove the influence from him, but could not. He remarked, that nothing I could do would remove it, but that it would pass off of itself in about half-an-hour, and that he should come out of it 'with a shudder.' During all this time his eyes were open. He could hear, and converse with me and with persons who were very near him, after they had been near him for a few moments, but with no others. He was playful, and apparently happy. In about an hour, he started suddenly, and with a violent spasmodic shudder, and appeared to be restored to his natural state. Of nothing that had passed had he any recollection, and the only difference that I could discover between this and the state in which he had usually been when magnetized, was that in *this* his eyes were open. He had none of the usual attachment for me:—all seemed transferred to the magnet, and I had no power to remove it. . . Since then he has manifested no desire for the magnet; but when it was afterwards brought near him, he said, after a few minutes, that he felt the same influence

coming over him, and immediately caused it to be removed. I might add, that the application of living magnetism in this case was in a course of medical treatment for a spinal disease, and was generally applied under the direction of experienced physicians, and apparently with very happy results."

As a commentary upon this letter, the deductions that present themselves are of vast value in illustrating the nature of the force so far considered, as simply, or rather scientifically, physical and independent of a prescient intelligence. It is clearly established, at all events, that the magnet which has been developed in the experiments of mesmerizers is not an exclusive agent of the human organism, but is a universal force in nature. That, inasmuch as the human nerves, and the centres of the brain, are peculiarly susceptible to its influence, the whole outward material world is, through the medium of this agent, brought into an intimate relation to the centres of the human organism. Furthermore, as one human brain stands in a closer relation to another human brain than it does to a mere inorganic point, it follows, that it should be more susceptible to its influence; and since this influence takes place without necessarily involving the action of the mind, that it is *not* therefore necessarily connected with the spiritual world.

The subject debated by Rogers, regarding the force which was developed *without* an intelligent direction, soon opens out into proportions far more important, and introduces us to a force, the same in essence, that *has* an intelligent direction.

The grand question now, and that which the

community most anxiously wait upon for a satisfactory answer is, Whence this intelligence? How s the table, the chair, made to move as by a law of intelligence? And how is it that the medium's hand is made to move, without his own free-will, with tenfold the rapidity in intelligent words than the medium can voluntarily execute? In short, Whence is all this apparent intelligence, without the conscious effort of any mortal present?

Carrying the argument still farther, to the theory of impressions as giving dominancy to the mind in an automatic and pre-sensatorial state, we think that the idea can be very plainly stated thus:—

That an impression may be made upon the brain, or any part of it, in accordance with the law of sympathy, and then outwardly reflected in involuntary action, has been often demonstrated. Iodine and bromine, on the daguerreotype plate, through the medium of light, receive an impression of objects brought within the focus of the camera. This may be said to be by a chemical law. True, and so when an image is impressed upon the retina of the eye through the same medium. It is not only, however, through the medium of light that impressions are made, but also through the medium of every form of imponderable or primary agency—through heat, magnetism, electricity, and odyle.

In this process, the same thing takes place that transpires every day; so that it is not necessary that a person should be thrown into a mesmeric trance in order that an impression may be made, or a predilection of the brain effected. It is strange that it has not been seen that the mesmeric phenomena are but

the *extreme* developments of the common principles of humanity—*the law*, says Rogers, *of every man's every-day life*. It is the property of the brain to receive impressions, but it is the prerogative of the self-conscious, self-determining, disciplined mind to reject or to receive their influence. And this is the reason why a highly-disciplined mind prevents a person from becoming a medium. An undisciplined mind has not a control over the brain, therefore it cannot prevent the influence of others in making impressions upon it; and, when made, it cannot prevent their reflex action, or reflection back upon the outward world. This is also why, in order to develope a medium, a suspended state of the mind, a passive will, is found necessary. This condition is precisely the same with that which the mesmerist requires.

The pre-established conditions are, therefore, first, a non-controlling state of the mind as to the action of the brain under the influence of external agencies; second, a consequent readiness, on the part of the brain, to be played upon by the external agencies; and, third, a promptness of the brain to give a reflex action of these impressions back upon the outward world, through the medium of the automatic apparatus, in the bodily frame, or through the odylic force, that, it is clear, emanates from it. Coming now to the "intelligent power," it follows that the material agent that produces the raps is controllable by the peculiar changes that take place in the organs of the brain. To have this fairly understood, a fact, familiar to all scientific persons, may be stated. It is this: whenever a change of

matter takes place, the primary physical agent that especially belongs to that form of matter is evolved. For illustration: if you take a strip of sheet iron, about three-fourths of an inch wide, by four or five inches long, and hold it in the magnetic dip of the earth, so that the lower end shall reach within an inch of the north-pole of a magnetic needle, and, in this condition, give it a sudden twist (one hand being at each end of the iron) the needle will act as if struck with a stick, when indeed no visible thing has touched it. In such experiments over a delicate needle, Rogers, by varied twistings of the iron under varying circumstances, produced nearly a hundred varying results upon the needle.

It is, no doubt, the prerogative of every man's mind or spirit to control the motions, and consequently the changes, of his brain within perscribed limits; but, when the condition of the latter is such as a mesmeric trance and the like, the man's own personality is suspended in its prerogative action. The predominant influence upon it then becomes material—sensuous. Then the reflex action of another's brain will readily take place. Another's wish or request will act as law. But if we assume the agent engaged in the physical phenomena to be a spiritual agent, independent of the medium, then, allowing the will of the medium to control it, we have a human will controlling an independent spirit's will. This absurd and quite untenable notion is very dogmatically held by many spirit-rappers, who contend that the table, or whatever it may be, "moans and speaks" under the compelled influence of disembodied spirits!

Speaking of a fictitious identity induced into the

brain, which loses all apprehension of self, and becomes individualized with that of another, by which there arises synchronism of thought and idea in a sort of prophetic transport, as has been shown in a previous chapter, in the instance of the mesmerist's power over his patient, Mr. Rogers says, that, in some instances, a diseased action induced upon the organ adapted to the mind's sense of personality, will, in forms of this derangement, represent itself as God, in another will represent the personality of our Saviour, in another that of a mouse, and so on to a toad, a shilling bit, a stone, a—nothing, according to the accompanying conditions. The same thing takes place in sleep, trance, somnambulism, and clairvoyance. Professor Gregory, in speaking on such a subject, mentions several illustrative cases. Among them was that of a clairvoyant, who in this state described a locality in Caffraria. While describing himself as flying through the air, he all at once began "to appear uneasy and alarmed, and told me," says the Professor, "that he had fallen into the water, and would be drowned if I did not help him. I commanded him to get out of the water, and, after much actual exertion and alarm, he said he had got to the brink. He then said that he had fallen into a river in Caffraria, at a place where a friend of his was born. What seemed very remarkable was, that he spoke of the river, the field, farmhouses, people, animals, and woods, as if perfectly familiar to him; and told me he had spent many years in that country, whereas he has never been out of Scotland." Now, no one will contend that this state of the young man belonged to the personal,

conscious self, the identical *me* of the man. The action of that rod yielded to the suspension of the normal consciousness, the reason, and the will. The remaining action, therefore, was that of the brain centred under the influence of impressions.

Mr. Rogers has known persons, on first becoming subjects of the "intelligent" phenomena of the "raps," to exercise a conscious control, as to the character or manner of phenomenal developments, but, on becoming more deeply inducted, the brain became subject, in specific ways, to external influences, entirely independent of the "desire," or "wish," or "will" of the medium. Then, all seemed so foreign from the real personality of the individual, as to induce him to believe himself subject to the influence of heavenly visitants. The same thing has been observed by Mr. Ballou. "It is a remarkable fact," says he, "that some mediums, who, during the first few days or weeks of their mediumship, knew themselves to have considerable power over the manifestations, have gradually become clear and passive, and found themselves, at last, utterly unable to affect the responses and communications made through them. For several weeks after he found himself a medium, he could get very much such answers to questions as he pleased. During that stage of his mediumship he felt quite confident the whole thing was but a new species of 'mesmerism.' But after a while he began to fail of controlling the agency, and at length found it operating entirely independent of his most determined "wishings and willings." The power is allowed within the influence of the "wishing" and the "willing" energy. The "wishing" and the

"willing" are within the consciousness. But it is the "wishing" and the "willing" that in any case produce the phenomena directly. The "wishing" and the "willing" cannot take place in the brain, without at the same instant effecting a change of the matter of the brain. And it is by a change of matter that odylic agent (as in the case with electricity) is affected—eliminated. Now, whether this change of matter takes place in consequence of an action of the "will," or a "wish," or a conscious emotion, nothing but one of these three will be known to the mind, whereas the change of matter will be unconscious, and the consequent emanation of the physical agent will, therefore, be unconsciously affected, unless it interfere with the sensorium. But avoiding this, there will be no conscious knowledge of the physical emanation.

This fact is clearly exhibited where the medium's characteristic, bad orthography, is distinguished in the "raps." There is, however, no wish, no desire, no will, for such a result. There the habit of action lies in the brain—the tendency of the organ of language to act in a particular manner when excited is also there. We find, then, that certain words are always unconsciously spelled wrongly, whether the medium writes or spells the words vocally in the usual state, or whether she is acting in her professional capacity. In this latter case, she does not think of the words that are to be rapped out, nor of the letters that are to be thrown together to compose these words, and yet *her* orthography comes out true to the habit of her orthographic organ; otherwise, why should the "raps"

come on precisely those letters she would herself use in a word if writing to a friend?

In the face of such scientific evidence alone, we reckon that the assumption of a supernatural agency is as absurd as it is dangerous. It is worse than precipitate to attribute to the influence of disembodied spirits, that which so evidently lies within the sphere of the human organization, human relations, and mundane agencies. Applying the arguments thus based, and any reasonable inference deducible therefrom, Mr. Rogers has given us an analysis as subtle, as we must say, it appears to be most severely tested by the laws of logic—to the principles which produced that dominancy—the phenomena of the divining rod; as also to the magnetic trances, not only of the Delphic Pythoness, but of the Seeress of Prevorst. It is inferred that all those cases where the phenomenon of movement of the divining rod takes place, the movement depends upon a specific relation of the nervous system to the emanation of this mundane agent, as the emanation of od from metallic substances and subterranean currents of water. It follows, therefore, that it is the same mundane agent that Reichenbach has discovered and named Od. But here it must be observed, that it is not the external od alone,—it is that in conjunction with the od of the human organism. It is the latter, then, that gives the characteristic phenomenon of the movement of the stick; and it is because the od force from the particular locality is specifically related to the od force of the organism, and the action of the one in relation to the action of the other, that the stick moves. In haunted houses

the like conditions are fulfilled—namely, the emanations of mundane force in relation to specific conditions of human organisms, especially the nerve-centres. Where these conditions are permanently established, a dwelling will be permanently "haunted." And not only dwellings, but particular localities, in hilly and mountainous regions especially, will be haunted spots. In such a place a man will not only hear strange sounds, but he will (as Goethe and the Seeress of Prevorst at one time), see his own ghost. For it is in this mundane imponderable that the organic form of animal and man can reflect itself with all its characteristics. It is on this that every human being impresses the peculiarities of his life in the world; so that, after the material form itself has gone to decay, its representation—its ghost—still exists, as that of the star, Alpha Lyra, which would still play its influence twenty years after the star itself had been blotted out of existence. When the nervous organization of an individual is brought into *rapport* with this mundane imponderable, the action of the former will have its exact counterpart repeated in another place, even at a distance. Strange as this may seem to those who have never thought upon the thousands of phenomena attesting it, it is nevertheless a fact of nature.

The following substantiated account, in which the theories already quoted are brought to bear more directly upon the alleged spirit manifestations, seems to possess very much further direct evidence against the assumption of a spirit or demon-agency.

"We formed," says this account, "a complete circle of all in the room around the table, joining hands,

Mary Cruck and Mrs. Bushnell (mediums) included. A case knife was thrown from the mantel into the middle of the floor, a distance of several yards. A book was thrown from a stand against the opposite wall, and various articles were tossed about in a very strange manner—all the while a loud and muffled knocking being kept up, causing the house to shake, and the table and floor to jar and tremble." In this case we have some important points presented, which have a very close relation to each other. We have a change of the normal nervous condition of a person by the process of pathetism, which suspends the controlling action of the mind over the brain, and subjects the latter to the control of mundane influences. As a result of this condition, the strange sounds are produced. The pathetizer wishes the sounds to be produced here and there, at various points, and they are accordingly produced. Questions have been in this case, too, propounded, and are readily answered by the "rappings." These questions are addressed to *supposed* spirits, and the rapping-answers come *as* from spirits. So, as in some cases where the questions have been addressed to the supposed spirit of a horse, or dog, or frog, answers have come as if from them! So, also, when questions have been addressed to the names of Franklin, Washington, Wesley, Tom Paine, and to that name, "above all others hallowed o'er all the world," and which it is profane to "take in vain," the replies have come *as* from *them!* To understand this the better, let the reader remember what has been previously said regarding the action of the brain, which, without the control of one's own personality, can at any time be made to represent any personality, from a toad to that of the Divinity.

Mrs. Bushnell, whose name has been mentioned as connected with the above case, was the first who introduced the "rappings" into Cincinnati. It was, however, only under peculiar circumstances that she succeeded in that city. In some localities she could obtain no rappings, while in others they were readily elicited. In some states of the atmosphere she could obtain none, in others at once. Near certain non-conductors she could obtain none. Away from all the thwartings of electrition, she was on safer ground. All the symptoms, all the accompanying phenomena, clearly point to that one simple solution. Mundane influences, generated by a subtle and earthly action, can and do so control the brain that visions come upon us, hallucinations, subjective sensations, and all the attributes of this "mystery." And yet, O folly! such phenomena in these learned days are looked upon as arising from the agency of our heavenly friends, when, as we have seen, a nervine or a smart cathartic will cause their entire expulsion, together even with "the rappings."

We have followed with great benefit Mr. Rogers almost to the conclusion of his valuable work, and yet we have not been able to do full justice to the closeness of his reasoning, and the strict unity of purpose, which is a marked characteristic of a most excellent contribution to psychological science. If he has not enabled us to prove *de facto* the premises he has started with, and we think he rather *has* than has *not* —more "yes" than "no," to use an expressive idiom —he has done trenchant work in enabling us to demolish the tenability of the supernal theology.

CHAPTER XI.

ERRORS AND DANGERS.—CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS.

"There is a superstition in avoiding superstition, when men think to do best if they go farthest from the superstition received."—BACON.

OUR longing after the immortal and the unseen is a master passion. We would know *where* our dead are—their conditions of existence—their pains and pleasures—and what occupations fill up the eternity through which they progress. Year after year we cast yearning looks at lowly graves, where our friends, our beloved, lie. We are struck on reflecting that all we knew of them lies in folded cerements, passing by the transmuting chemistry of nature into other forms of being, while that which animated it, which lighted up the eyes, made the lips speak, the body move, has gone—*whither?*

No wonder, when Death stands apart, and those in the body speak to those in the soul, or of the soul, by the agency of magnetic affinities, that the dazzling chimera should make the weak drunken—the devout fanatic—and the feeble mad. Yonder, on the shores where lambent lights play and give dim glimpses of unspeaking glory, stands what spirit-mediums call our future heaven—where they declare no Re-

deemer is needed, and where between us and it there stands no Cross. Neither sorrow nor sacrifice, neither repentance nor remorse, form elements—conditional or not—on which that course of future glory depends. The drug or philter, the hatchis, the oblivious opiate, or the fabled elixir, have lost potency. Wake from the influence of these, any or each, and the world stands barren and bare—frozen and bitter as before—especially to him whose eyes are jaundiced, and who looks on this life as something to endure with disgust and weariness; and on the other, as the whole end and aim. Obviously, the primal elixir here is death; but death stands aloof from him who desires it most, and the impatient madman finds himself staring SUICIDE in the face!

Here, then, at the very threshold, stands the awful monition, and the tremendous prohibition; for, assume this matter to be earnest and deep enough to embody life and death, as we cannot but think it does, we are sure that only the strongest minds, and most resolute capacities, dare enter the *adytum*, turn over the secrets of the *penetralia*, and return back, safe and sound, with the news that all is true, or all is false.

The uninitiate, in patronizing spirit-rapping, play with an agency which they do not know;—like the servant of the necromancer, who, when his master was out, devoured by curiosity, began to read his books, and raised a spirit he could not exorcise. Those that cast out devils became often possessed of devils. "Père Surin," (See Calmiel, vol. ii. p. 61), "at Loudon, in 1635, described his disaster in a letter to the Jesuit Attichi:—'For three months

and a half I have never been without a devil in full exercise within me. While I was engaged in the performance of my ministry, the devil passed out of the body of the possessed, and, coming into mine, assaulted me, and cast me down, shook me, and traversed me to and fro, for several hours. I cannot tell you what passed within me during that time, and how that spirit united itself with mine, leaving no liberty either of sensation or of thought, but acting in me like another self, or as if I possessed two souls; these two souls making, as it were, a battle-ground of my body. When I sought, at the instigation of the one, to make the sign of the cross on my mouth, the other suddenly would turn round my hand, and seize the fingers with my teeth, making me bite myself with rage. When I sought to speak, the word would be taken out of my mouth; at mass I would be stopped short; at table I could not carry the food to my mouth; at confession I forgot my sins; in fine, I felt the devil go and come within me as if he used me for his daily dwelling-house.'"

This is but the type of what might happen, but as there is a general absence of devotional feeling, and religious pretension of any definite kind, among them, this kind of mania, at least, is likely to be spared us, only that there is no knowing what modes and forms insanity may take when the full tide of frenzy rolls over the land. If the power of the mesmerist were transferred to inanimate matter, and the miraculous touch of altar, tomb, or relic, produced the like result, we should have no doubt whatever as to the awful consequences.

We must look on mesmerism as on chloroform, a most useful agent in pathology, and one of those benign sedatives that, for the performance of some tremendous surgical operation, suspends the nervous sense, and assuages pain. As such it cannot be prized too highly, nor can it be too cautiously used. To play with it is to play with that which destroys in an instant. Mesmerism is, no doubt, cousin-german to these manifestations, and can produce many similar results. A recent writer conjectures that it may even be made the means of combating the dread horrors of hydrophobia; nay, it may be put as a way against cholera, or any other terror by night or day, which has as yet mastered man, and defied precaution and skill. Here the perils that encompass it are amply compensated for by its blessings; it is only in its abuse, in wanton experiment, and baseless theory, that the greatest danger lies.

The great interest felt in what the so-called spirits give utterance to, through their mediums, arises from the belief that the "spirits," good or bad, know the truth, and must speak it, and that there is a kind of compulsory power, not exactly defined, existing humanly, in extracting these truths, important or not, from them; and that the wisdom and knowledge they acquire is a part and parcel of the condition of their new existence. They are capable, therefore, of teaching the wisest of the "sons of men." People who doubt the words of the sage and the philosopher, who dispute with the *savant*, and question the oracles of science, yield implicit credit to *any* voice from the spirit-world. Those who turn in doubt and scepticism from the Scriptures, "listen to

messages that are reeled off the spiritual telegraph, whether the utterances are given from an angel, a spirit, or a devil." One thing, in the delusion as it stands, will trouble the infidel and the materialist, and that is, that spirits *do* exist, and that this existence *can* be proved to him. Contiguous to humanity—touching, and even jostling it—is the sphere of the immortals; but it is necessary to guard strictly against the acceptance of all that may be thus communicated, for reasons which are rather obvious and deducible, than explainable and ratiocinative. As they must acknowledge a master and a teacher, from whom all is derived, so they can only confirm, and inform—reply, but not *teach*.

Let us turn over what records we will, we shall find the annals of psychological medicine abundant in that dreary literature which chronicles misery, madness, and death. Beginning with a dread of divinities, and a belief in, and an awe of, the supernatural, the rest was easy of completion. Madness has fearfully increased of late. In artisan communities, where religion is a never-failing topic of dispute and discussion, insanity has developed itself, and spirit-manifestations being at hand, the amalgamation may but too soon take place. Madness, and its fearful consequences, are visible wherever the "mystery" is regarded as supernatural. Evidence, painful evidence, teems upon us from all quarters. We know that murder, suicide, and raging madness, *must* mix up in all those things which are involved in mystery, and belong to the world to come. If to this be added a doctrine that denies future punishments, where shall we find ourselves after a while?

Many contradictory accounts are given of the nature and extent of happiness enjoyed by those of the spirit-world, but all agree in putting a *decided negative on the frightful doctrine of a hell*, as commonly understood. These spirits speak, like Swedenborg, of the pleasures of hell—a place of low, wild, and riotous mirth and mischief, where spirits burn in love divine, and the evil of their nature is the fuel that is consumed for ever. Some say that all are happier and better than the happiest and best upon earth; others deny this, and say that some become worse than they were upon earth. We are told that Dr. Gridley, an American physician, when inquiring into this matter, put the spirits on their oath, not trusting to their word, and they took the oath, and affirmed, that about one in fifteen became worse for ever.

We regret not having space to indulge in any lengthened extracts from the enormous amount of evidence before us, in order, if indeed it be necessary, to show the alarming effects and extent of the spirit mania. One brief notice, copied from American journals, will suffice, as a type of an enormous multitude of equally deplorable cases. The superintendent of the Hospital for the Insane in Indianopolis, Indiana, says, in the report for 1852:—

"An elderly gentleman, who had previously enjoyed good health, now an inmate of this institution, was living in peace and harmony with his family, until the 'spirit-rappers' visited the neighbourhood. He attended their exhibitions, and believed their revelations; but, unfortunately for the old gentleman, it was revealed to him by one of the 'mediums'

that his second wife, with whom he was then living, had caused the death of his former companion. The old man believed all to be a direct and truthful revelation from the spirit-world, and from that hour his domestic happiness was at an end. Sleep forsook him, and he became a maniac, which he still continues to be, with but dim prospects of recovery."

We have done; and now offer our parting respects to the reader. We trust that it will be remembered, that our chief object has been, to state frankly and fairly everything connected with the "modern mystery" which seemed to demand notice; to set the matter in its true character before the public, and to arrest the mischief its false character was daily perpetrating. This object we have honestly and earnestly endeavoured to accomplish: what success has attended the effort the reader can now determine. At all events let there be repeated, with "reciprocal sincerity" between us, the simple but sublime sentence, "Peace be with you!"

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